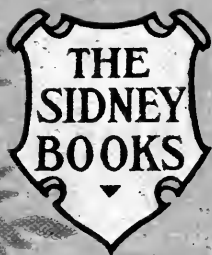
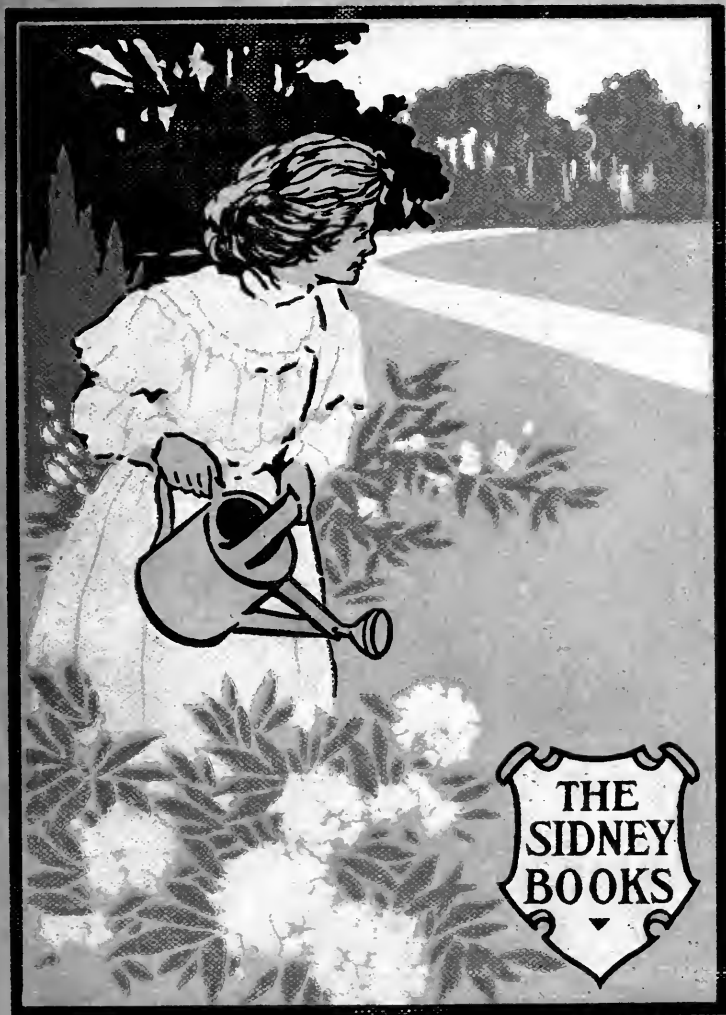


# JANET AT ODDS



ANNA CHAPIN RAY

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## ANNA CHAPIN RAY'S STORIES

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- I. SIDNEY : HER SUMMER ON THE ST. LAWRENCE
- II. JANET : HER WINTER IN QUEBEC
- III. DAY : HER YEAR IN NEW YORK
- IV. SIDNEY AT COLLEGE
- V. JANET AT ODDS

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- V. URSULA'S FRESHMAN
- VI. NATHALIE'S SISTER







“‘I’m afraid you’re very old-fashioned,’ Janet rebuked him.”

FRONTISPIECE. See page 59.

The Sidney Books

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JANET AT ODDS

BY

ANNA CHAPIN RAY

AUTHOR OF "SIDNEY AT COLLEGE," "JANET: HER WINTER IN  
QUEBEC," "TEDDY: HER BOOK," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS BY  
HARRIET ROOSEVELT RICHARDS

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# JANET AT ODDS

## CHAPTER ONE

“**N**O; I don’t want to go to England,” Janet said flatly. “It will cost money, much money; and, next year, I shall be a senior and have to have many clothes. Instead, you are going, and I shall stay here and try an experiment.”

“Here?”

“In Canada.”

Mrs. Leslie looked startled.

“Without me?”

Janet laughed.

“Don’t worry, Mummy. I’ll get myself properly chaperoned. That is part of the experiment.”

To Janet’s manifest disappointment, her mother delayed her question. Instead, —

“But Ronald wants you,” she urged.

“He can’t have me. It would cost quite too much for this year. Besides, you are blessing enough, and he should be thankful accordingly. You are to go, Mummy. You can sail on the twenty-fifth, and I’ll start north, the same night.”

“Where?”

“To Quebec.”

"But where in Quebee?"

Janet's eyes flashed, half with fun, half with determination, as she said demurely, —

"Louis Street, corner of Ursule."

"Janet!"

This time, Janet was satisfied with the sensation she had produced. Louis Street, corner of Ursule, was the Leslie's home, owned by them for generations and never leased until the lessening family and the needs of Janet's education moved them south across the frontier.

"Yes, Mummy," she responded quietly.

"What are you going to do there?"

Janet hesitated for a moment, and caught her breath. Then her chin stiffened and, leaving her place where she had halted just inside the door, she sat down, facing her gentle, dainty little mother.

"Now, Mummy," she said; "it's time to talk things out; I've been thinking them long enough. If you don't mind, please listen and give me all my turn first. When you know all about it, I'll give you leave to object as much as you like."

"How do you know I shall object, Janet?"

"Because you never remember that I am grown up," Janet made direct response. "I am almost a woman, and this is a woman's plan, not a girl's freak. You will believe that from the start; won't you, Mummy?" The young voice quivered a little.

Mrs. Leslie's quick ear caught the quiver. However, she knew Janet well enough to ignore the



weakening of which Janet would be the first to feel ashamed. Janet Leslie, aroused, could rage like a small whirlwind; but her girlish code of emotions held no place for tears, save in the rare moments of her extremest distress. Her father's death, her brother's leaving home to take position as secretary to an English lordlet, the missing the one society election on which she had staked her best effort of her student life: these were the things that had brought the tears. On lesser counts, Janet's chin might quiver; but it stiffened in time to preserve her from the charge of frequent feminine wailings. There was a stubborn streak in Janet Leslie that helped her to keep her feelings to herself. It was the same with her plans. She made them first, discussed them later. Now she braced herself to expound her latest one.

"As I say, you are going to Ronald, this summer," she began. "That is settled. While you are over there, playing and resting, I'm going to see life on my own account."

"What do you mean, Janet?" Mrs. Leslie was English, so no wonder she looked a little anxious.

"The Frazer lease runs out, the twentieth of June. I'm going home, to open the house."

"Janet! What do you mean, child?"

Janet laughed.

"That's the only real question, Mummy. I don't know whether I mean a house-party, or a boarding-house. It's all in the way you look at it. You know things are going to happen in Quebec, this

summer; that is, if the place wakes up in time. Every house up there is worth its weight in gold."

Mrs. Leslie's answering nod was a bit regretful.

"I know," she assented. "I'm glad you feel that way about it, Janet. It will make it easier to get Ronald to understand, and not be disappointed."

"Ronald is n't a bat," Janet responded, in flat brevity. "However, he is n't going to be disappointed, as long as he has you."

"But, if I stay here, instead?"

"You are n't going to stay here."

"In Quebec, I mean."

"So do I. Now, Mummy, listen. You are n't playing fair, interrupting like this. You are going to Ronald; you need the rest. Besides, that's where my plan comes in. It all developed out of something Mrs. Argyle said, at Easter. She wants to go up for the last of July. Rob and Day are teasing to go up for the whole summer; but they none of them care to go into a regular boarding-house. I want to go up there, open the house, let them come, and one or two others, and try my hand at keeping house."

"Child! You can't. Who would do the work?"

"Mary Browne, plus Elsie." Janet leaned back to watch the effect of her trump card. Mary Browne, for three years, had been the backbone of the whole Leslie establishment, and the Leslie establishment, in those same three years, had won its reputation as

the leading colony of freshmen in all Smith College. As for Elsie, she was chief housemaid, and a host in herself.

Mrs. Leslie capped the trump card with a joker.

"Who would chaperon you children?"

"Mrs. Argyle."

"But when she is n't there?"

Janet smiled inscrutably, as she played another trump.

"Mrs. Blanchard. Jack is sure to go up for his vacation, and he would be so glad to have his mother with him."

The trump took the trick. Mrs. Blanchard was also English. Also, she had seen better days, much better, and her decorum was beyond all question. Nevertheless, Mrs. Leslie interposed a final barrier which, to her mind, seemed insurmountable.

"But, Janet child, you really don't know the first thing about running a house," she said.

With a bouncé, Janet plunged headlong over the barrier.

"I can learn, I hope," she said disdainfully, for, notwithstanding her British birth, she was now an American college girl, and, as result, all things on earth now seemed easy to her. "Mummy dearest, you are a prudent old darling; but, when you come to think it over, I believe you'll decide to let me have my way."

And she did.

All this talk went on, one night in late April, after

the rest of the household was in bed. By the end of the first week in May, the matter was practically settled. By Decoration Day, Mrs. Leslie's passage to England was booked, and Janet's plans were taking shape. By mid-June, it seemed doubtful whether the great old stone house in Louis Street could stretch to meet the strain which was bidding fair to be put upon it.

"But it's going to be so fearfully sprangling," Sidney Stayre objected suddenly, the night before they all were leaving Northampton. "Do you believe you ever can make it go?"

With Mrs. Leslie in their midst, three girls were sitting on the wide veranda of the Leslie house, resting their weary feet after their labours as junior ushers at commencement, while they discussed the details of their summer plans. Their talk was desultory and with long pauses, as suited the languor of the summer moonlight, and of their weariness. Moreover, long, long pauses are allowed between old friends, and the trio could look back upon a friendship, well-tried and extending over the past five years, a friendship scarred, now and then chipped a little at the edges, but totally unbroken.

Never were three points of a scalene triangle more totally unlike than those three girls. Janet Leslie, daughter of a rich man who had died poor, Canadian and hence a thing of reservations and of inherent shyness, was a dark, lithe, determined little mortal, quick to take offence, slow to give her love, loyal to

the point of fighting for that love, once it was given, reticent, self-contained and with more than a dash of genius in her composition, a girl who, though acutely sensitive, generally ended by making the best of her limitations.

Quite at the other end of the scale was Day Argyle who, at nineteen, had never known a limitation in her life. The child of a prominent railway magnate, the only sister of a totally adoring brother, Day had spent her life in surroundings which only lacked an occasional ungratified wish to make them altogether perfect. Strange to say, she had come through it all, unspoiled, thanks to her grand unselfishness and her still grander sense of humour. Her friends were from out the best of New York homes; her life among them, instead of limiting her sympathies, had made her eager for contact with others whose fortunes had placed them outside her own charmed circle. Next to her brother Rob, Day's closest friendship was with a man whom she had first seen in the uniform of a Pullman conductor. In her college course, she had picked out her friends with a superb unconsciousness of social convention. The Argyles were too sure of their ground to be able to be snobbish; and Day had a curious trick of choosing people for themselves, not for their names, nor their frocks, nor even for their grandfathers. In spite of her father's picture gallery, his private car and his stables, she was as simple as Janet herself, and far less self-conscious. Personally, she was

plump and pleasing, though without much claim to beauty, save for her mop of fluffy hair and her brave brown eyes that danced and dreamed by turns.

Midway between the girls stood Sidney Stayre. As outspoken as Janet was reticent, as downright as Day was dreamy, Sidney walked merrily, sturdily along through a life which was singularly free from friction and misunderstandings. In fact, Sidney's greatest talent lay in her trick of understanding people, of putting herself so far into their places that she could know what they were likely to do, and why they were likely to do it. In a sense, she suffered from her own ability. All sorts and kinds of people, feeling her understanding, promptly took it for granted that she was their most devoted friend. They accepted her admonitions in good part, though Sidney was as direct of speech as she was of understanding. However, they also absorbed her time remorselessly; and, in her more unregenerate hours and to her closest friends, Sidney bewailed the fact that her acquaintances took so much time confiding in her that she never had a chance to enjoy her friends. Her friends by no means included all the world. Granted the reason, Sidney was a born good hater. And the friends divided themselves into two classes: Some, and the others. Some included the three people beside her, her family, and five others; for them, unflinching, she could have laid down her glad young life. And yet, with the exception of Day Argyle and her cousin Wade, the Some, with one

consent, would as soon have thought of cuddling a steel ramrod as of petting Sidney Stayre.

As for Mrs. Leslie, she was a dainty little Anglo-Canadian widow, who had accepted her reversed fortune with a courage which had surprised her oldest friends. At the first, she had opened her fine old home to stranger boarders who had chanced to be the Argyles. Later, yielding to Janet's wish for four years in Smith College, she had bravely abandoned her own home city, and taken up her abode in Northampton where, even in that stronghold of New Englandism, the Leslie house had speedily won golden reputation.

But Sidney's speech had fallen on no such pause as this. Instead, Janet lifted her head, as at a challenge, and asked abruptly, —

"Why should n't I make it go?" And her tone was a bit pugnacious.

Sidney laughed.

"Bless your heart, child, don't put on your war-paint. I merely meant that, apart from all practical matters like meat 'n' tater, and dusting down the front stairs, you will have your hands full with managing your human menagerie. Suppose we don't get on together?"

Janet's answer was terse.

"Then you can get on, apart. If you fight, that's your lookout."

"We sha'n't fight," Day said reassuringly.

"We sha'n't," Sidney echoed, though with a strong

accent on the pronoun. "I'm not so sure about the others."

Janet turned thoughtful.

"My main anxiety is about Mrs. Blanchard," she observed.

Both Sidney and Day burst out laughing at her tone. It was Day who answered.

"She is n't fighty, Janet."

"Nor skittish," Sidney added. "In fact, I think she's rather too demure. I've never been able to see how she could have for a son such a determined creature as Jack."

"Jack's no creature," Day protested.

"He is, too. At least, he did n't happen. Anyhow, he is a dear. Still, he is rather a contrast to his mother. She seems to me as decorously futile as one of her own balls of wool. It must have upset her completely, when Jack turned Pullman conductor for a living; that is, if she stopped knitting long enough to be upset."

Again Day protested.

"She really is very sweet, and he is devoted to her."

"That's just another proof of his bigness," Sidney answered swiftly. "A littler man would get fussy at her. He takes care of her as a big brown bear might look out for a sleek little tabby-cat. You need n't begin defending Jack Blanchard to me, Day Argyle. If you do, I'll proceed to defend your Rob."



Janet broke in, thoughtfully and with a literal recurrence to Sidney's earlier phrase.

"How do you mean we sprangle, Sidney?"

Swiftly Sidney converted her white muslin lap into a species of social chart.

"This way. Look. Here are you, and Day, and I. Beyond me, there's Wade and Irene, and there's Paul. Nobody knows what he may have turned into, in all this time, and nobody knows what has possessed him to want to come. Behind Day, there's Rob —"

"Rob's in the circle," Day objected suddenly.

"Well, Jack, then; and Mrs. Blanchard is beyond him, out on the hem of things."

"I thought you were importing her, to have her in the middle," Day objected again.

Sidney shrugged her shoulders tolerantly.

"She's soft; she'll pack in anywhere. And then, there's Amy Browne. She is your contingent, Day. Who's to room with her, Janet? You said we all would have to double up."

Janet rose, crossed the veranda and stepped out into the white moonlight, which brought all sorts of dusky shadows into her dark hair and betrayed the fun in her eyes.

"I put Amy Pope in with her; it's so much easier to have one 'Amy's room' than two. At present, I am grudging the space I have to give to Paul. It seems a shame to waste an entire room on him."

Sidney planted her elbows on her knees and rested her chin in her palms.

"If he has grown up along the lines he promised," she said thoughtfully; "no one room can hold him. He probably will fill all space. Paul Addison himself is a factor to be reckoned with; and when you add to that his sophomorehood —"

"It is precisely nine hours since we ceased to be juniors," Day interrupted. "I really would n't begin to put on airs too soon, Sidney."

Heedless of the admonition to her friend, Janet faced about with one of the sudden changes of mood so characteristic of her.

"Girls," she said abruptly; "I don't want to be too horrid; but we can talk, all summer long. This is —" she shut her teeth for an instant; "is my last night with mummy until next fall. I rather think you'd best go home and go to bed. You must be very tired."

However, in spite of her advice to the others, it was a long two hours later when, clinging fast to the mother hand, Janet Leslie went slowly up the stairs.



“ A clicking of glass and china showed where Janet was busy.” — *Page 13.*



## CHAPTER TWO

**E**XACTLY one week later, the Leslie's great stone house in Louis Street was humming with unwonted sounds of toil. Mary Browne, huge and hilarious, had abandoned her pots and pans for the sake of the front stairs and hall which she was scrubbing until the fine old oak shone like a mirror. Upstairs, Elsie was polishing the furniture of the bedrooms, hunting out fresh linen and plumping up pillows and mattresses as if the household health depended on her ministrations. The sound of her blows was echoed from the back yard where French John was beating rugs, while a jangling of keys, followed by a clicking of glass and china, showed where Janet was busy, taking out the best dishes and ornaments which had been packed away when the house was leased.

From cellar to the garret tucked away between the quaint old upper dormers, the whole place stood open to the fresh June air. It had been Mary Browne's doing, this wholesale overturning of the house, for Mary Browne had sniffed disdainfully, as she followed Janet into the hall, three days before.

"It smells just for all the world like a tenement, Miss Janet dear," she had averred. "Rented houses has a flavour to themselves; there's nothing else

quite like it. Your mother would have a fit, if she was here. We'll open the windows quick and get the strangers out, and the Leslies back in." And the bump and clatter of a casement added emphasis to her words.

That had been three days before. Since that time, Mary Browne had been most active in living up to her theory. She had gone to Canada to cook; but she was a cheery, buxom soul who was ready to turn her hand to whatever need arose, and now her hands were full. She and Elsie had had many a long discussion with Mrs. Leslie, the past few weeks; she and Elsie had talked longer still together, that first night in their room among the dormers, while their young mistress lay asleep below. Warm-hearted, loyal Irishwomen both, they adored Janet, admired her sturdy determination to carry out a summer plan which would have filled with fear the heart of many an older housekeeper with a far larger staff of servants.

"It's a big old house for the two of us to run, Elsie," was Mary Browne's ultimatum; "and, if the child keeps on, she'll have it stuffin' full, with all her people. Still, we'll make it do, between the two of us. We've worked before; and there'll be the fun now and then, with all these new sights to see. Let the child have her way, if she wants it, and turn a pretty penny, while she's having it. Next year, if we live it through, we'll all spend the summer in a rolling chair at Atlantic City on the

profits." And, six minutes later, she was snoring, her open mouth still creased with the smile she had accorded to her own prediction.

For the next three days, Mary Browne and Elsie appeared to be doing their best to make their rolling chairs a necessity. Long before Janet was awake in the morning, they were hard at work, scrubbing, airing, sorting, settling down. Three sketchy meals interrupted the day, and the day's work ended long past the late June twilight. There was much to be done, for Janet's plan was now an established fact, and the first instalment of Janet's house-party was scheduled to arrive, that Saturday afternoon.

It was Day Argyle who ordained that it was to be called a house-party.

"Is n't it your house, I'd like to know?" she demanded. "And are n't you inviting us?"

Janet laughed.

"Some of you," she conceded. "Still, I was under the impression that you and Rob invited yourselves, and then invited Jack."

Day disdained the concession.

"Besides, what if we do — well, coöperate in the financing?" she demanded again. "We might as well do that as bankrupt ourselves in tipping a whole row of greedy servants. It amounts to the same thing in the end. No; it's just a regular house-party, Janet, with you as hostess. If only Mother Leslie could have been there, too!"

Janet's sigh was a little bit forlorn.

"Yes, but —"

Day interrupted.

"You'll lose your grip, if you sigh like that, Janet," she admonished her friend. "Your mother is tired, after three years of girls. Moreover, Ronald wants her, and he deserves his turn. Imagine the poor fellow without a soul to wink at, when Lord Axmuthy gets too preposterous! It would have been lovely to have had your mother; but we can amuse each other, till my mother gets there, and Mrs. Blanchard will do for decorum's sake."

"Yes, if I'd ever seen her." Janet's assent was rather grudging.

Day continued her reassuring chatter.

"But the rest of us have. She is a nice little thing, a good deal like a fresh marshmallow, sweet and soft. And she'll sit in a corner, all day long, knitting and purring away about her godmamma who was third daughter of the Earl of — Something. Poor dear little lady! She is such reduced gentility, and it does so go against the grain!"

Janet was sensible, but very tired. For that last reason, she flushed hotly.

"It does with all of us, Day."

There was an instant's pause. Then Day rose, crossed the room and laid her two hands on Janet's shoulders.

"You know I did n't aim that at you, dearie," she said directly. "You are n't reduced. You Leslies are ten times as splendid as you would have



been, if everything had gone on in the old way. I hate to say it out, for it seems like slandering Mrs. Blanchard; but you must see the difference. She will wear Bonnet silk and cluny lace, and then she sits down and gets plaintive, while Jack supports her. You are up and busy, every one of you, doing things to support yourselves. As result, you are getting stiff backbones, and she is turning to a jellyfish."

"Poor Jack!" Janet said thoughtfully.

Again Day opposed her, and quickly.

"Not a bit. It's made him grow strong enough to do for the two of them. But," her mood changed swiftly; "is n't it good he's to have so long a vacation? Rob settled it, wheedled daddy into saying that Jack has been overworking and needs at least six weeks to pull himself together."

"Has he?"

Day's eyes showed her worry.

"Honestly, Janet, I'm afraid he has. When I was home, last time, I was shocked to see how thin and tired he looked. Mother spoke of it, too. My father does n't mean to put too much on him; but Jack is so useful and so willing that it is almost impossible not to let him overwork. I wrote to Rob, and Rob went right to the point and struck for a long vacation. Jack rebelled; but there's a substitute hired to take his place, and he can't do anything now but give in."

"Then he'll be up—?" Janet's pause was one of question.

"The sixth. The rest of us: Rob and I, Sidney, Irene and the two Amys will be up, the twenty-ninth. When does Sidney's cousin come?"

"Paul? The third."

"I wonder how he will fit in with the rest of us," Day said thoughtfully.

"We used to be great chums, four years ago. Still, that's a good while, and none of us have seen him since. Strange that he wanted to come! But I don't worry about him."

"What is the worry, dearie?" Day inquired.

And Janet answered briefly, —

"Mrs. Blanchard."

However Mrs. Blanchard, arriving in Quebec the same night of Janet's advent, proved to be impossible as a source of worry. She was as sleek and gentle and contented as a Persian kitten; she was as decorous as Beacon Hill and as placid as Westminster Abbey. Moreover and most important of all, she won the heart of Mary Browne completely by her wholehearted approbation of Mary Browne's creamed potatoes and the spotless state of Mary Browne's kitchen floor. Young as she was in the ways and lore of the housekeeper, Janet already realized that, in a party like her own, it was much more important that the guests should have the approval of the kitchen than the liking of the parlour. And Mary Browne, albeit with certain attributes of the angels, yet had her own dislikes.

Nevertheless, it would have been impossible to feel

dislike of Mrs. Blanchard. She was far too colourless for that; but Janet, daily more tired, more homesick for her own absent mother, forgot the colourlessness in the comfort and found herself submitting to the coddling, coaxing ways of Mrs. Blanchard with an enjoyment that surprised herself. By bedtime on the third evening, when the house was all in order and Janet could give herself time to sit down and contemplate her rough, red hands and frayed fingernails, she was ready to admit that Mrs. Blanchard, knitting by the droplight, was a most comfortable centrepiece for their prospective group.

Meanwhile, the prospective group was having adventures on its own account.

Jack had seen them off at New York: an infinite number of bags, umbrellas, magazines and boxes of candy, five girls and Rob Argyle.

"Rather like a Mormon colony," he had observed, as he followed Day into the car. "However, Rob, I must say you look equal to your responsibility."

Rob, helping the porter to stow away the luggage, faced about, with a laugh. In truth, Rob Argyle did look equal to most things, his approaching senior dignity at Harvard among them. He was a big, broad-shouldered, jovial fellow with a thatch of yellow hair, the jolliest, truest blue eyes conceivable, and a little limp which he would always carry as souvenir of the day he had gained great glory on the football field. In reality, he was a singularly handsome boy; but he was such an all-round good

fellow that no one ever stopped to think much about his looks.

"I'm not responsible for this crowd," he averred; "excepting Day, that is. I suppose a fellow is always bound to be responsible for his little sister."

Jack shook his head at the bag in his hand.

"Not on your life, Rob. It's generally the other way about, as far as you and Day are concerned. She clucks over you, like a motherly hen. There! That all right, Sidney? Sure? There's the call to go. Take care of yourselves, and tell Janet I'll be up, next week."

Day followed him to the door.

"I do wish you were coming with us, Jack."

"To help Rob out, in case of emergencies?" he asked, as his strong hand shut on her slim one.

"Yes, and to look out for me. With you and Rob, I always feel safe enough to defy emergencies," she said. "Besides, it would be so much more fun."

He gave her hand one final squeeze.

"The fun comes later, Day. Take care of yourself and Rob, till I get there to do it for you. Good-bye." And he was gone.

Day lingered in the vestibule until all chance of a backward glimpse of Jack had lost itself in the brick walling of the tunnel. During the past three or four years, the girl had grown increasingly fond of this young Canadian, taken into her father's office, then into their own home life out of surroundings quite alien to any she had known. In a sense, he

was like an adopted brother; he had gained her trust, her liking, then her love. True, he could never stand in Rob's place in her life; but Day's life was large enough to give room for two. Between the two, she never sought to make comparison. It was enough for her that her own best times always happened when both the boys were with her.

It was nearly nine o'clock, next morning, when Rob parted the curtains of his section and stepped out into the aisle, as sleek and smiling as if he had just come from his own room at home. His blue eyes widened in astonishment, as they moved from Sidney, reading in Day's section across the aisle, to the open door of the stateroom where his sister was chattering with Irene and the two Amys.

"I infer I overslept myself," he observed so suddenly that Sidney, oblivious of his arising, started and dropped her magazine between the seats.

"I infer you did. No; don't get it. It is n't worth the trouble, and you'll only bump your head. I suppose there's no especial sense in asking if you rested well."

"Don't I look it? What time is it?" He glanced at his watch. "Nine o'clock! Jove! I thought I was hanging on to the tail of the lark. Breakfast ready?"

"Readier than we are."

"What do you mean?"

"Merely that breakfast is sixty-four miles off."

"Sidney! Get out! That's a nice fable to

narrate to a starving man. Where are we, anyhow?"

"Sitting on the track, a mile below Newport. We've been here since five o'clock, or so."

"Why didn't you tell the conductor to mope ahead?"

"There's been some sort of delay to the Boston end of the train," Sidney replied tranquilly. "We're waiting for it to catch up."

"How long?"

"Till it gets here."

Rob lifted up his voice, quite unmindful of the brace of travelling salesmen, comparing notebooks at the other end of the car.

"Oh, Day!"

Day appeared on the stateroom threshold, with a trio of faces behind her.

"Waked up, sleepyhead?" she inquired.

"Merciful Moses, yes! And I am hungry within me. Have n't you girls got something to eat?"

"Chocolates."

Rob made a wry face.

"At this hour of the morning? Bah! That's girl all over. But you must have something solid to gnaw on, in all those bags."

Interrogation, however, proved that they had nothing more sustaining than the box of salted almonds which Amy Browne produced from the depths of her belongings. Rob waved them aside disdainfully.

"They would n't fill a corner of my appetite. I

want food, Amy, man food, not girl pickings." And, that hope vanished, he fell upon the button of the porter's bell.

He emerged, smiling, from his conference with the porter; then he proceeded to make known the cause of his smiles.

"He says we're stuck here for at least two hours more. There's been some sort of a small accident to the Boston train, and we have orders to wait and condole with the fragments."

"Two hours!" Sidney rebelled. "What nonsense, Rob!"

"There are some through passengers who might not agree with you. However, that's not the point. If we walk up the track for about a mile, we'll find a passable hotel where we can get an apology for a breakfast. The train will pick us up, when it comes along. Who's for trying it?"

They all were, it appeared; and the walk, coupled with the lateness of the hour, developed an appetite which took away all need of apology on the part of the breakfast. Even the girls fell upon the overdone eggs and the underdone chops with relish, and Rob made a mighty meal. When, at long length, he had finished, he gave a sigh of full content.

"I'm better now, lots better," he observed. "But," his blue eyes wandered along the row of empty dishes; "I'll be hanged if I don't feel sorry for the through passengers, when they come in to breakfast."

There were but two of the through passengers, however; and the hush of expectancy became an utter silence, as they made their long-awaited advent in the car. Even the travelling salesmen stayed their talk and stared; while the five girls caught their breath in wonder, and Rob so far forgot his manners as to murmur,—

“Heavenly Mike! what next?”

The porter came in first, his face clothed in one immense grin. In one hand, he carried the most immaculate of suitcases whose end bore the unmistakable label of a college banjo club. The other fingers were shut around an equally immaculate umbrella and a jointed fishing-rod, together with the handle of a limp string-bag whose assorted contents, a bit too openly displayed to suit most tastes, were topped with a good-sized bottle of milk. Behind him, more decorous by reason of his rank and smothering his amusement as best he might, walked the conductor, bearing in his arms a sloppy, blue-satin-coated baby. In the rear of the procession came the apparent owner of the baby, a tall, broad-shouldered stripling of perhaps eighteen, well-bred, well-clothed, yet walking with the awkwardness which comes with extreme self-consciousness, and blushing to the very lashes of his honest gray eyes.

The pause lasted until the new passenger had seated himself, made what lap he could and received into that lap the sloppy baby. Then, as the engine whistled and the car moved slowly northward, the



groups began to talk, with an absorption in their own concerns which amounted wellnigh to frenzy.

Later, Rob came with information gleaned from his talk with the conductor. He imparted it cautiously and by bits, however, for the stranger's seat faced their group, and Rob had no mind to be caught discussing his chance neighbours.

"That poor chap's work is cut out for him, to-day," he reported, with a chuckle. "I'm thankful I'm not in his shoes."

Day looked up from the cards she was dealing out to Irene and the Amys.

"You probably could n't get them on," she said.

"Don't want to. They'd pinch, in every sense. Listen, girls, and let the game go hang. There was a sure-enough accident to the Boston train, rather a bad one, I fancy. The baby's mother had some ribs broken, and —"

Irene, the oldest of the group, looked up in quick pity.

"Oh, the poor little thing!" she said.

Rob chuckled.

"Which? You'll change your cry, when you hear it all. She was going to see her father in Quebec, or somewhere near there. Instead, she had to be switched off to a country hospital. This fellow — he's a Williams man — was the only other person going through, and the conductor bamboozled him into offering to take the youngster along and hand him over to his grandaddy."

"Rob! Then he is n't the baby's papa?"

"Does he look it?"

For her only answer, Amy Pope let her gaze rest upon the clothes, the haberdashery, the freckled face, the honest eyes of the boy before her, then on the limp and squirming baby that hung upon his shoulder. Then, in a denial too strong to be expressed in any words, she shook her head.

"Do go and talk to him, Rob," Day begged him. "It must be horrible for him to sit there alone, and know we all are watching him. Really, you ought to try to help him out."

But Rob was obdurate.

"Not much, Day," he answered. "I'm not out collecting any new acquaintances. Moreover, in his place, I'd rather stay incog., and put it through alone."

And the stranger did put it through alone, save for the handy ministrations of the porter who, to all appearing, had spent his life amid a score of limp and lopsy babies. Together, they removed the gorgeous bonnet and the faded blue satin coat; together, they administered milk with a zeal which deluged their knees and left the baby strangling; together, turn by turn, they entertained the baby, the one holding him upright and shaking him a little, while the other waved watches and shiny knives and shoe-horns before his bored and supercilious eyes. And so the long hours wore away, and with the hours the miles, until at last the train was

on the heights at Harlaka, ready to slide down the long grade that leads to Levis.

Then came the final tussle, that of getting the baby, cross now and proving the lustiness of his lungs, back into his coat and bonnet. His adopted parent tried, and failed, failed signally and with ignominious results to his necktie. He looked for his ally, the porter; but the porter was busy, brushing people and sorting out bags. He tried again; again he failed. Then desperately he put the child down on the seat, clamped him down with his umbrella, wedged the umbrella home with his suitcase and, flushing scarlet to his ears, dishevelled, unneat, and his gray eyes appealing, he made straight for Irene where she sat alone, while the others, in the state-room, were busy with the luggage.

"I say," he blurted out, while he halted beside her, cap in hand; "I beg your pardon, you know, and all that; but, if you've any idea how this kid's overcoat puts on, for heaven's sake, do come and help a fellow!"

And Irene went.

## CHAPTER THREE

“**H**OW much of a powwow do you really think it’s going to be?” Janet queried indolently.

“Powwow?” The guest’s tone was injured, defensive.

“Yes, just about that. From all accounts, it’s going to be a jumble of Prince and Police and pageants. You might as well sum up the three *ps* in one, and call it a powwow,” Janet observed, a little more caustically than she was quite aware.

The guest sniffed. Then she mounted her high horse.

“How American you are getting, Janet!” she remarked.

Janet inspected her fingernails during an interval of silence. Then she laughed.

“Really? I had n’t discovered it, Gladys. Where do you notice it?”

The guest, a dainty little Canadian blonde, coloured at the mirth in Janet’s tone.

“In your point of view,” she said a little tartly. “You seem to think it’s nice to come back and make fun of Canada. Quebec is n’t as large as New York, perhaps; but it is fully as —”

But Janet cut in, with manifest penitence.

"I don't happen to come from New York; and I'm not making fun of Quebec, Gladys. I love it as much as you do, perhaps; and I am perfectly happy to get back here. The only trouble is, it does n't seem like Quebec, this summer. It's not been our way to go mad about a thing, as you are doing now."

"We are not mad; we are interested," Gladys corrected her.

"Yes; but —"

Gladys continued her correction.

"And it is a great thing. You can't be three hundred years old, every day."

"Mercifully not." It was Amy Pope who spoke from a corner of the sofa.

The guest frowned at the obtrusion of this second American point of view. Then she sought to enlighten the darkness of its ignorance.

"It really is going to be a great event," she said. "People are coming from all over the world to see it. Besides all the rest, there will be the fleet, and the fireworks, and —"

"Fun," Amy capped her sentence demurely. "You may as well sum up your *fs* as your *ps*, Miss Horth. But where is all this party to happen?"

"Has n't Janet shown you?" There was distinct rebuke in the tone.

"We have only been here, two days," Amy reminded her; "and it takes a little time to get one's self unpacked and settled down. Yesterday, we

did n't put our noses outside the door; and, this morning, we only took the shortest kind of a walk."

The guest half rose from her chair.

"You 'd better come out with me now."

"You are going out?"

"Yes, for rehearsal."

Janet started into quick attention.

"Gladys! Are you in it? I thought it was only Saint Roch's people, and that sort."

Gladys Horth settled back into her chair. She had found the old friend she had come to see, and she resolved to prolong her call accordingly.

"So it was, at first; but they could n't make it go. Now we all have gone in for it. It's great fun; we're rehearsing, almost every night, and all the people we know are in one or the other of the two court scenes."

"What are you?"

"I'm in Henry's court; I'm to wear a blue satin gown and a monstrous crinoline, and have my hair in puffs. We girls are all sewing on our costumes now."

"It must be fun." Janet's tone was envious.

"It is. And that's one reason I came here, to-day, as soon as I heard you were back in town. Why did n't you tell us you were coming, Janet?" Gladys broke off to question.

Janet cast an expressive glance about the room.

"I wanted to make sure of my ground, before I advertised it," she said whimsically.

"You always did. Is it a fact you're taking boarders, this summer?"

The question was a shade too blunt for the taste of Amy Pope, and she cut in, before Janet could reply.

"Not a bit of it. The crowd of us — we're all chums among ourselves at home — thought it would be good fun to have a house-party, this summer, and this was the best place for it we could find. Janet manages it, because it is her house; but we all take a hand in the arrangements, all but Mrs. Blanchard. She's guest and chaperon."

"Oh-h? Is that the way you do it, in the States?"

Amy appeared to find something infinitely amusing, either in the question or the voice. It was an instant before she answered.

"Yes," she said then. "It's our Knickerbocker ancestry, I suppose. We all love Dutch treats."

Janet interposed.

"But about the pageants, Gladys?"

Gladys recalled herself from her mystification.

"Oh — yes. I stopped here, to-day, to see if you would n't like to be in one. They're not all full, by any means."

"Really?" Janet said alertly. "I'll ask the girls."

"What girls?"

"Did n't you know there were six of us here together?"

"Oh, yes. But they are Americans."

It was Amy Pope's turn to be blunt.

"What's the difference, as long as we can act?" she asked.

Gladys Horth smiled, and the smile held its own hint of superiority.

"Most of us don't have to act, you know. All we do is to stand about and look pretty."

"I was n't aware that being an American disqualified one for that," Amy responded dryly.

Again Janet interposed, for she felt that there was imminent danger of her friends' flying at each other's throats. Fond of them both in totally different ways, she would have found such a situation the more embarrassing from not being certain which to second.

"I think we'd love it," she said, with all the enthusiasm at her command. "You say the places are n't all full?"

"Not all. He wants a few more people, especially for the Francis scene. That court is all on horseback, and not all of us can ride."

"Alas, I can't do that!" Amy sighed.

Gladys bent upon her a glance of pity.

"Oh, no; one would n't look for that, you know," she said quietly.

Amy defended herself, her plumage by now thoroughly ruffled.

"I used to," she explained. "My pony bolted once, and threw me, and broke my ankle, though;



and it spoiled my nerve so I've never cared about riding, since."

And again Gladys made answer quietly, —

"Of course."

"I'll talk it over with the girls and Rob, to-night," Janet said hastily. "I think some of us may like to go in for it. At least, it will add variety to things; and it will be good to talk about, after it is all over. Must you go? I'll telephone you about it, in the morning."

"But you will come in, whatever the others do?" Gladys urged. "We all want you, Janet. The old set are all in Henry's court; we count on you to be there with us."

Janet laughed and shook her head.

"Nice of you. But I must talk it over with the others first."

"I don't see why."

Janet's answer held its own note of dignity.

"Because I don't care to go into it, alone, and leave my friends out. We came up here, this summer, to be together."

"Where are they now?"

"Sidney, Miss Stayre, has gone to Lower Town. The others went down to the Island. They'll all be back for dinner."

"I'm back now," Sidney proclaimed negligently, as she came strolling into the room, her hat in one hand, her pins in the other. "What's wanted, Janet?"

"A family discussion, apropos of the pageants. You really must go, Gladys? I'll telephone you, then, in the morning, after I've put it to vote."

"Who is the stiff-neckèd sister?" Sidney inquired flippantly, when Janet came back from escorting Gladys to the door. "And why on earth did n't you introduce her?"

Janet looked startled, then a little guilty.

"Sidney! I forgot. You see, we don't introduce people here, not when they're calling."

"Why not?" Sidney inquired blankly.

"Because — why, because it's not the custom. I suppose we think there is n't any need. Nice people know each other, and the others — well, the — why, you see it does n't make any especial difference about the others."

Sidney laughed.

"A nice, humane arrangement!" she observed. "The only trouble is, it fails to specify which is the nice one, and which is n't. With this haughty lady and me, for instance —"

"Gladys is a dear," Janet defended her. "She is one of my very oldest friends."

"That settles it," Amy responded promptly. "I'll take her to my heart, no matter how she snubs me. I think I shall call, to-morrow."

Janet frowned. The friction of the past half-hour had gone upon her nerves. Moreover, Gladys was a compatriot, and not to be made a subject for flippancy, now her trim little back was turned.

Sidney interrupted, out of her own train of thought.

"Where is Roberval, Janet?"

"I think," Amy pursued; "that you can make yourself a great deal clearer, Janet, if you write a note instead of telephoning. I want to see Miss Horth again soon, and I will carry the note."

"What about?" Sidney queried.

"Whether we want to be in the pageants."

"Of course we do, Amy. We want to take in all the fun that's going. Where did you say Roberval was, Janet?"

"I did n't say. You did n't give me a chance."

The chance was still lacking, for Sidney swept on.

"Paul is there."

"Paul Addison?"

"Yes. He went there to spend a week with some college friends, before coming here. I've a letter here, sent on from home; he writes that he will get here on the fifth. That's two days later than he planned. I wish he'd get here and have it over."

"What a cousinly speech, Sidney!" Amy rebuked her.

"Don't care. He is Judith's brother, and you've seen Judith for yourself. Paul used to be a thing of joy; but that was five years ago. Nobody knows what he may have turned into by now."

"A week will tell. Meanwhile, what about the pageants?"

The question was repeated, that same evening, repeated and discussed. There would be a certain interest in being inside the pageants, not only for the thing itself, but for the sake of having taken part in the three-hundredth birthday celebration of the quaint old city. Still, it would take time, and tie them down to frequent rehearsals and to ten days of constant action. In the end, though, the vote of the majority was for the taking part. Costumes are always fascinating, and there is a charm in being on the inner side of things. Irene, however, held herself firmly to her original negative.

"Wade won't get here till the thing begins," she averred, with a becoming blush. "He could n't be in it, if he wanted to ever so badly, and you need n't think I'd go into it, myself, and leave the poor dear to sit it out alone."

And the others applauded her decision. Irene Jessup had chosen her own commencement day, twelve months before, for the announcing her engagement to Sidney Stayre's cousin, Wade Winthrop.

"What are you going to do, Rob?" Day asked, in the pause that came after the applause.

"That depends. If I can get a job as mounted courtier, I'm all right. Else, I'm afraid it will be no go for me."

"Not really?" Amy Browne urged. "You'd be adorable in costume."

Rob laughed and shook his yellow head.

"Of course. I was born for silk doublets and lace

frills. Still, Amy, even you could n't desire to see me do the minuet thing they talk about."

"I could, too, Rob," she answered quickly; and, for a minute, their eyes met. Of all the girls, Amy was the only one besides Day who had known Rob Argyle before his accident, the only one who really understood the change it had made in all his life.

And Amy Browne, pampered only child of a magnificent home, was by no means the stuffed Paris doll she seemed. Under her gentle serenity lay force and generosity.

But Janet was once more calling her roll.

"What about you, Day?" she demanded.

"Depends on Rob."

"Day! Fudge!" Rob rebelled tersely.

"Fact," Day replied, with equal terseness.

"Hang it! I'm no spoil-sport."

"You won't be. I'm like Irene; I'd rather sit it out with the man of my choice than go through the giddy whirl alone." And, crossing the room, she plumped herself down beside her brother in the great chair where, by virtue of his masculine prowess, he sat enthroned.

Rob's arm shut around her shoulders promptly, although his dignity caused him to protest.

"Aurora darling, save my afflicted knee, or I can't bestride a courtly charger. Count her in, Janet. She's game."

"Not unless you are, Rob. I'm set on that point."

"I thought, from all appearances, you had set on me. Go on, Janet. Who next?"

Sidney and the two Amys gave an unqualified assent, Sidney because she was ripe for any fun that offered, Amy Browne because, other things equal, she always cast in her lot with the popular side, and Amy Pope from a secret determination to prove to Gladys Horth that Americans could act well and look well, too. Then the discussion centred itself upon the absent members of the party.

"What about Mr. Blanchard?" Irene queried.

Day forestalled all discussion by answering serenely, —

"Jack? He'll decide as Rob and I do."

"Well, I like that!" Sidney protested.

"So do I. Jack's very nice to have about one," Day responded. "What about your cousin, Sidney?"

Sidney shrugged her shoulders.

"Next week will tell. It remains to be seen whether he has stayed himself, or has turned into Judith's brother. Anything is possible, in five years."

"By the way, Sidney," Rob broke in; "we saw the baby, to-day."

"The baby?"

Rob laughed.

"Yes, I know it's not a specially apropos subject. Day, if you could move just one inch? There. That's all right. Now sit still. I mean the baby on the train, Sidney; the one with the adopted parent."

"How did you know it was the same one?"

"I did n't; 't was Irene. She assisted at its robbing, and she spotted it by its blue satin overcoat. It was taking a boat-ride with its grandpapa, and Irene was so overjoyed to see it that she claimed acquaintance."

"What did he say?"

"*Bu-bu-broo—oo*, as nearly as I can recall it. Is n't that right, Irene?"

"I meant the grandfather," Sidney corrected. "Did he say anything about the mother?"

"Yes, he said too much, and he said it very, very much too fast for my French to keep up with him. As far as I could get the gist of it, though, she was either dead, or going to be, poor soul!"

"And the baby will have to be brought up by its grandmother?" Day asked pityingly.

"I also gathered, from the old man's hatband and the condition of his buttons, that there was n't any grandmother," Rob answered, and, under his whimsical words, his boyish voice was grave. "Poor little chap! The broken rail has broken his life all up. The only comfort is, he is too little to realize what it is he's lost."

Day, still nestled into the great chair beside him, shut her fingers over his. There had been other breaks in other lives. None knew it better than her jovial brother. Her fingers shut on his; but brother and sister never needed words to make things clear between them. Instead, she merely added, —

"I wonder what became of the adopted parent."

And her wonder was destined to a speedy answer.

Meanwhile, the intervening days passed quickly, bringing with them the coming of the absent members of the party. Dominion Day came and went, and the Fourth, and the fifth of July dawned, and Paul Addison became uncomfortably imminent.

To four of the girls, the advent of the young Bostonian was a matter of idle curiosity. If he were an agreeable addition to their party, well and good. If not, they would make the best of him when they must, and leave him to go his way when they could. Six girls, all friends and with all manner of criss-crossing degrees of intimacy, could be sufficient unto themselves, regardless of intruding boys. Rob was always an established fact among them, and Jack Blanchard was fast bidding fair to become one; but they were different. Moreover, to all the girls but Amy Browne who never had attempted college life, sophomorehood seemed a thing of the remote past, and they were prepared to look on Paul, sophomore of a fresh-water college, as a mere child accordingly. That would be after he arrived, however. Till then, they bestowed upon him the least thought possible, even to Irene Jessup who was pledged to marry Paul's half-brother. Only Sidney and Janet, then, felt responsibility concerning Paul, the one because she was his cousin and so in part the reason for his coming into their group, the other because, years before, she and Paul had been exceedingly,



good chums, and one always feels more or less accountable for one's chums of yester-year.

Sidney had answered Paul's note, had assured him that she would meet him at the train. At the last minute, however, her courage failed her, and she pressed Day into service as supporting second. Day was nothing loath, and together they betook themselves to the station at the appointed hour. They had dawdled, going down the hill, for Day had insisted upon showing Sidney all the landmarks of her winter spent in the old city, three years before; and the train was already whistling at the city crossings, by the time the girls came into the square before the station. Then, as the line of cars slowed up and the passengers appeared upon the platforms, Sidney seized Day's muslin-covered elbow and whirled her about.

"Look!" she bade her friend. "There's the baby's adopted parent, there on the platform of the third car!"

In fact, there he stood, browner, more hilarious and far more irresponsible than before; but just as big and manlike and as honest. Apparently Sidney's quick gesture had caught his attention, for he looked up, met the eyes of the two girls fixed upon him, recognized them instantly and flushed scarlet, as he recalled the circumstances under which he last had beheld them. All his irresponsibility fled from him, and, with it, all his poise; and it was a blushing, self-conscious stripling who stepped down from

the train and halted on the platform. For a moment, he hesitated, still blushing madly and looking up, looking down, looking cornerwise, as if seeking escape from the open door of some hidden trap. Then, with an obvious effort, he pulled himself together, and shut his teeth. The next instant, to the utter consternation of both the girls, he had crossed the platform and cast himself upon Day's neck, with the astounding greeting, —

“Hullo, Sidney, old chap! You have n't changed a particle.”

## CHAPTER FOUR

THE drawing-room door opened a crack, and a voice queried, —

“Is this my going-to-be brother?”

Paul, his hands in his pockets, was whistling out into the busy street. At the words, he turned alertly.

“You bet!” Then he parried. “That is, if you’re Irene. I don’t want any more mix-ups.”

The door swung open, and Irene crossed the floor. Seen in the strong light of the open window, she was a girl who seemed all brown clothes and brown hair and friendly, big brown eyes. Paul liked her at the start. He also liked the grip of the strong, brown little hand that shut across his fingers.

“Yes, I’m Irene; and you’re ever so much like Wade. How is the baby?”

Paul laughed. He had a likable laugh, jolly and ungrudging.

“Search me! I left him in the arms of his granddaddy, and I trust he’ll stay there. You were a sister to me, all right. I think it took some brains on my part to pick you out and set you working for me.”

“And you did n’t really know us?”

Paul’s laugh, this time, was slightly shame-faced.

"Ask Miss Argyle," he said.

"She told me. I really think you could n't have been striving for dramatic effect, in choosing the method of your appearing." Irene laughed. "Still, I fancy Day will survive. Where is Sidney?"

"Gone to take off her hat. I wish she'd hurry up. I'm naturally very shy, you see, and she is my sole support, in this crowd of strangers."

"Except —" Irene's voice was suggestive.

Bravely Paul rose to the emergency.

"Oh, you're going to be my step-sister-in-law, and don't count. However," his honest gray eyes swept over her in manifest approval; "however, I must say I think old Wadeikins has done one sensible thing in his life. I wish he'd hurry up and finish up the job. Still, even if we did join forces on the infant child, we're not exactly old-time, trusty cronies, and Sidney —"

Irene sought to jog him on across the pause.

"You find her?" she inquired.

Paul's reply was terse, albeit lacking in convention.

"Bully!" he answered, and Irene, instead of being shocked, nodded in full agreement.

"What about Janet?" she asked then.

To her extreme surprise, both glance and voice lost all their directness, as Paul answered evasively, —

"I've only seen her for a minute, you know." Then abruptly he changed the subject. "What's the Argyle fellow like, Irene?"

Irene liked the matter of fact fashion in which

he assumed the relationship between them, and chose her as his temporary oracle. Her voice showed her liking.

"Altogether splendid. You'll like him, Paul."

Once more Paul whistled thoughtfully at the street outside the open window.

"Don't be too sure," he answered guardedly then. "He looks confoundedly superior."

"Who is that? Rob? Nonsense, Paul!" Sidney objected suddenly, as she joined them in the window. "You looked upon him with jaundiced eyes, because you thought he didn't appreciate your baby. Did you know Irene saw him, a day or two ago?"

"By Jove, no! How's the little chap getting on?" Paul demanded, forgetting Rob completely in the more absorbing interest. Then, after Irene had told her story, he added eagerly, "I'll tell you what, let's go hunting for him, first thing in the morning, and see what we can find out."

The girls assented; but the Fates willed otherwise. Next morning, Sidney was just coming down the stairs, and Irene was drawing on her gloves, in the hall below, when a crash and a shriek from the front room above sent the household to the rescue, with Paul six steps in the lead.

"I was beautifying myself for Jack," Amy Browne confessed penitently, when the curtains and a chintz-covered chair had followed the alcohol lamp into the street, to the manifest surprise of a calèche-load of tourists beneath. "I suppose I must have

joggled the lamp, when I put the tongs in; but I had just burned off a whole bundle of curls, and I was feeling a little fretty on that account. What will you do to me, Janet?"

"Send you out to see if you can match the curtain stuff," Janet told her practically.

Amy huddled her blue dressing-gown around her, while the burned-off tag-locks on her brow dangled in limp apology for the ruin they had caused.

"I'll be ready, in a minute," she said meekly. "I'm sorry, Janet. I did n't mean to."

But Paul, who had followed the ruins to the street, lifted his voice from below.

"All out! Sidney? Irene? I want my relations."

"What for?"

"To go to call on the kid, of course." And the group scattered as speedily as it had gathered.

"I say, Sidney, who are these Blanchards, anyhow?" Paul asked bluntly, as the two cousins and Irene went tramping down the Côte d'Abraham at a pace which turned all eyes in their direction, so swift was it, and so rhythmic in its strength.

"Why, they are —" Sidney hesitated; "they're the Blanchards, of course."

"Naturally. But where do they come in? Whose contingent are they?"

"Everybody's. Jack is, at least. We all adore him."

"Quite obviously, especially Miss Browne." Paul's tone was slightly dry, and he plunged his

fists into his pockets. "But whose party is he, aside from the Dame's?"

"The Dame? Oh, Mrs. Blanchard?" Sidney laughed outright.

"Yes. Is he our sort?"

"Paul, are you going to turn out a snob?" Irene asked him rebukingly.

"You bet your life I am, step-sister-in-law! There has to be one in every family, and I'm it for ours. As for the Dame, well, my mama does n't tell about her lordly relatives."

"Probably because she never had any," Sidney suggested remorselessly. "As for Mrs. Blanchard, Paul, we love her; but now and then we do regret her a little bit, when she gets too reminiscent. But Jack is another story."

Paul shifted his cap to the extreme back of his head, made it firm with both hands, then once more stuck his hands into his pockets.

"What's the yarn?" he queried then.

"It's Day's, or, rather, Rob's. Jack lives at their house, is just like an adopted brother; but, when Rob first discovered him, he was a Pullman car conductor."

"Moses! Was his mama broken in an accident, too? And will the blue-overcoat baby end in my home as my adopted brother?"

Irene laughed at the consternation in his tone; but Sidney swept on with her story, a story she loved well, as holding its own bit of unpractical romance.

"He was very nice to Rob, looked out for him, and all that. It was soon after Rob was hurt; he was very lame then, and glad of the care. He remembered it and, when he had a chance, he introduced Jack to his father. They took him back to New York with them, to be Mr. Argyle's secretary; and then, the first thing we any of us knew, they took him into their home, and he's lived there with them, ever since. Sometimes, I even wonder if they know he was n't born there."

"Hm!" Paul meditated, whistling softly to himself. "So that's it? Is he — well — is he conductor-y?"

"Not one bit," Irene responded quickly.

But Sidney lifted her head a little.

"What if he were?" she asked, and her voice was ominously quiet.

They crossed to Levis in a body, that noon. Six of the party were eager; Rob and Day were wildly hilarious. Paul alone held himself aloof from the general mood of expectant rejoicing, held himself judicial, even critical. In choosing this attitude, he felt he had reason on his side. Were not his father and his grandfather listed in *Who's Who*? Was not his mother an invariable hostess for every globe-trotting notable who climbed up Beacon Hill? Moreover, was he himself not a Williams sophomore and reasonably sure of his election into Alpha Delt.? If the others wanted to be chums with a Pullman car conductor, well and good. For himself, he would



wait to see what the fellow was like. A crowd of girls were not too discerning judges; even Rob Argyle might not prove himself infallible, good comrade as he had shown himself, the night before. Paul mounted his attitude accordingly. He tumbled off it, headlong, the instant that the train came in, bringing Jack Blanchard, bareheaded and smiling broadly, upon the lower step of the New York sleeper.

And yet, there was nothing especially striking about the looks of Jack Blanchard; that is, if one excepted the steady, kind brown eyes and the soldierly carriage of the wide shoulders. Whatever claim to good looks he might once have put forth had been injured by a scar across his temple, a scar whose winning had endeared him to all his friends. But the poise of his head, the shut of his mouth, the look in his eyes now and then, the grip of his hand and, above all else, his laugh: these things showed the man, and the man was bound to gain attention, liking, at the start. Four or five years older than the others, more self-reliant and masterful by reason of his life and of his army training on the South African veldts, Jack won the trust of strangers, the loyal enthusiasm of all who dared to call him friend. And yet, jovial and kind as he was to everybody who crossed his path, Jack's friends were singularly few. It was his choice to keep that relation a bit more sacred than is the fashion nowadays. Moreover, the very difficulty of getting into that small circle made it a coveted goal to the outsiders who, otherwise,

might have stopped to question whether one really could be chums with a man who once had worn a corporation uniform.

A part of this Paul took in at a glance; a part it needed all the summer for him to learn. However, the first glance had led him to repent of his strictures, and accordingly he voiced his repentance, as he started to walk away at Sidney's side.

"He's all right," he observed, with what seemed to him effusive cordiality. "I'm not sure you overpraised him, Sidney. I rather like his looks. Oh-h—fudge!" For he found himself speaking to empty air. Sidney had attached herself to Jack's immediate bodyguard, and Paul was left alone.

He annexed himself promptly to Amy Pope, who appeared to be likewise outside the coveted radius of Jack's chumship. Moreover, Paul had liked Amy at the start. She was pretty; she knew things, and she never suppressed her views of affairs in general for the mere sake of expediency. Paul, too, loved a wordy tussle, and already the two of them had crossed swords more than once, leaving Paul by no means always the winner in the skirmish. He had retired to bed, the night before, adoring Sidney as of old, loving Irene as the brother he was so soon to be; but, down in the depths of his boyish soul, convinced that his good times, that summer, would centre in Amy Pope. Unless—? There was Janet, and they had been such chums before. Paul shook his head at his necktie, then gloomily laid it down.

Janet was changed. As yet he had been able to form no notion of what was going on inside the brain of the reserved young girl with the determined chin and the alternating glints of fun and fire in her dark eyes.

"Amy Pope is scheduled to be my present She," he observed to himself, as he tucked himself between the sheets. "I like a fighter, and she's a corking good one, so long as she does n't get too fierce."

But fierceness was in Amy's character only when she fought for her friends, not with them. Now she greeted Paul gayly, as he followed her on board the ferry, then led the way to the bow where wind and sun both struck them sharply, as they leaned on the rail with their eyes upon the rock-walled city across the river.

"You did n't tell us how you found the infant, this morning," she reminded him. "Was he overjoyed to see you?"

"He would have been, if I had only found him. 'As it was, I'd mislaid the street where I put him, and Sidney was in such a hurry to meet Blanchard that she would n't give me time to look it up."

Amy laughed softly to herself.

"The Blanchard microbe? It is funny, when you stop to think about it. And yet, you can't help liking him, when you come to see him."

Paul nodded.

"Yes, he's better than he sounds in the advance notices. Of course, if it were only girls, one would put it down to — Beg pardon?"

"Don't mind me," Amy besought him. "Go right on."

"I was going to, only you interrupted," Paul assured her calmly. "As I was going to say, if it were only girls, one would put it down to the romance of the thing. The story really is romantic: leaving college to go to the Boer War, coming home to find his mother minus every red cent, and going to work at whatever came. I suppose," Paul sighed heavily; "that's what makes a girl burn off her lovelocks in a fellow's honour. But Argyle is worse about it than his sister; and, from all accounts, my own venerable brother Wade is down with the same disease. I appear to be the only one who has n't caught the germ."

Amy cast a backward glance across the deck.

"Not guilty," she responded quickly then.

"Are you immune?"

Amy's sigh echoed that of Paul.

"He is," she answered briefly. "I am outside the ring of adoring satellites for the simple, sober reason that I can't get him to manifest the slightest interest in my existence. When I'm visiting at the Argyles', he treats me with a sort of humane politeness; but that's all. He's never rude; he's much too nice for that. He just forgets all about me, and it hurts my feelings — hard. There are times when it's my chiefest wish to step on his toes, to make him aware of my existence."

She looked so pretty, as she spoke, so full of her

naughty determination, that Paul's gray eyes danced in sympathy with her whim.

"Agreed!" he answered tersely. "Let's."

"You, too?"

"I feel it in my bones, and also in my heart, I shall. There hasn't been much time, yet. However, as I said, let's."

Amy sank her chin on her fists, joined knuckle to knuckle.

"How?" she inquired.

"I'm not sure yet. I'll meditate. In the meantime, I wish to find my kid."

"Why don't you?"

"Because, as I told you, I have mislaid the street. I thought I'd know it again, because there was a legless boy in a goatcart on the corner where I turned in. I left the kid in the third house."

"But it is barely possible the goatcart may have moved," Amy suggested.

"Sure. The same possibility also applies to the kid. The best thing to do is to find the cart, and then count three. I'll tell you what." Paul glanced up at the city, now apparently hanging directly above their heads. "You and I are n't in this Blanchard love-feast; we'd get homesick, if we sat about on the edges and looked in. Therefore, we'll go up with the others and feed, and then we'll leave them to patacake their idol, and we'll go hunt the babe."

"Would it be polite?"

"It would be very sensible."

Amy went on a fresh tack.

"What shall you do with him, when you do find him?"

Paul looked a trifle blank at the question.

"How should I know? The decent thing, I suppose. Let's see. You pinch the baby cheek, and press a bit of gold into the baby palm."

"Press the button," Amy suggested irrepressibly. And Paul capped her phrase as irrepressibly.

"And hear the kiddie cry. I suspect that will be the cold truth of the situation. Anyhow, we'll go. What's more, we'll take him down some gum drops."

"What for? He has n't any teeth."

"You bet he has. I got my finger into his mouth once, by mistake. And, anyhow, they'll do for corks, if he gets too outspoken."

"All right. Wait, though. What about rehearsal?"

"What rehearsal?"

"The pageants. We're all going out, to-day, with Miss Horth."

"The deuce we are! What for?"

Amy explained. When she had finished explanation, she added, on her own account, —

"I think, if you don't mind about the baby, I'd rather go out there. Miss Horth is Janet's chiefest local friend; but she is very haughty to all of us Americans, and I'd a little like to keep my eye on her and watch her do it."

Paul reflected swiftly. Then he laughed.

"They can," he assented. "Likewise, they're funny while they're doing it. It used to be a drawn game between Janet and my sister Judith. Methinks I'd also like to watch this one happen. We'll call off the baby-hunt till morning. Meanwhile, by way of getting ready, we'll sally forth and buy the gum drops and a drum."

## CHAPTER FIVE

“**W**HERE is Paul?” Janet’s voice was heard to ask in the hall outside, about the middle of the next morning. A moment later, she pushed open the door of the back drawing-room. “Does anybody know where Paul is?” she demanded for a second time.

Sidney looked up from the ball of wool she was winding from the skein looped over Jack’s outstretched hands. The ball matched the one in Mrs. Blanchard’s lap, and was obviously destined to serve as its successor.

“I don’t,” she answered, while Jack took advantage of the temporary lull to scratch the bridge of his nose with one stiff thumb.

“Curious how a chap itches, once his hands are put out of commission,” he observed discursively. Then he added, “We haven’t got him concealed about our persons, Janet. In fact, I’ve hardly spoken to the boy, since I came.”

“Isn’t he with some of the others, Janet?” Sidney asked.

“I think not. Rob and Day have gone for a drive, Irene’s writing letters in her room, and Amy just went out shopping.”

“Which Amy?”



"Amy Browne. She went to get some new curtain stuff to put in place of the one she cremated in Jack's honour."

Jack looked up sharply.

"What was that?"

"Janet! How mean of you to tell!" Sidney reproached her.

"Not a bit. Did n't I tell Jack I had put on my new pink muslin in his behalf? That's as bad as to curl up my front hair into a frizzle. I likely should have done that, if it only had been becoming." And Janet proceeded to pin on her hat above the smooth, thick hair that framed her face.

"What about Amy?" Jack queried.

Janet laughed.

"Sidney says I must n't tell; but I think I will, else you'll imagine greater things than really happened," she replied demurely. "Amy is a thing of vanity, and she knows that curly fluff of hers suits her face to perfection. By way of making it more fluffy in preparation for your advent, she burned up the curtains of one of the front windows."

Jack looked mystified.

"I fail to connect," he said.

"Jack, you dear old innocent!" Sidney mocked him. "It's evident that you have n't a sister of your own, and that Day's hair curls of itself, without any help on her part."

"So does Amy's; does n't it?" he asked, so blankly that both girls burst out laughing.

"I'll tell Amy that," Janet assured him. "It's tribute to her skill, and it ought to atone for the ragged ends she left, when she burned herself, the other day."

Deliberately Jack let the wool slide from his hands and turned to face the girls before him.

"Do I gather," he asked whimsically, yet with a little accent which somehow showed that the idea was not agreeable to him; "that girls, nice girls, roast their hair into frizzles like that?"

"Yes," Janet told him remorselessly. "Also occasionally they roast themselves."

"But you don't," he urged.

Sidney halted in her efforts to untangle the dropped skein.

"Merely because, as Janet says, we look better as the Lord made us, with straight hair. Else, we should become curly, too. Do you mean to say, Jack —"

"I mean to say I supposed girls, nice girls, the girls you and Day have for friends, were just as nature made them. I think I'm rather sorry I've found out the truth," he answered bluntly.

"I don't see how you've kept from finding it out till now." Sidney's tone was thoughtful.

Jack's gaze rested on his mother, trim in her inevitable black silk frock and little lace cap and ruffles.

"I was busy about some other things, you know," he reminded Sidney, with a smile. "There were n't

many girls in my life, till I was long past Rob's age; and," his brown eyes turned to her expressively; "when they did come, they weren't the sort that needed to improve on nature much."

Sidney's colour came, and she returned to her knots with some haste. It was not like downright Jack, this new trick which had been coming in his speech, the past few months. Day had noticed it, too; the two girls had spoken of it together, had wondered what it meant.

Janet, meanwhile, pursued the question.

"But you don't mind it, Jack?"

"I don't like it, if that's what you mean." He threw aside his momentary seriousness and laughed out in his old jovial fashion. "I'd rather take you as you are, and make the best of you."

"I'm afraid you're very old-fashioned," Janet rebuked him. "All in all, though, I think I won't report this conversation to Amy. She might find it ungrateful, especially since she has branded herself in your honour. It really was a horrid burn, to say nothing of making charcoal of half her front hair. And she is a dear little thing. But has anybody seen the other Amy?"

"The dear big thing?" Sidney looked up from her knots once more. "I haven't seen her since breakfast."

"Does it strike you that you have a lamentable scarcity of names in this crowd?" Jack remarked, as once more he held out his hands for the skein. "Two

Amys and two Brownes. I should think you might get a trifle mixed up now and then. Ready, Sidney? All right, only do hurry up; my arms are paralyzed. Oh, by the way, if it's Amy Pope you want, I saw her starting off with young Addison, an hour ago."

"With Paul?"

"Yes. They seemed bent on mischief, too. He had a huge bundle under his arm, and they both were chuckling over something, as they went through the hall. Steady! There's another put-through place."

"If you put it through once, you have to, every time," Sidney objected.

Again Jack's eyes rested on her face, and his smile now was not wholly jovial.

"So I've generally found it," he answered. "Still, in the end it's worth the while."

Janet, heedless of the little allegory, had plumped herself down upon the arm of Mrs. Blanchard's chair.

"Tired, dearie?" Mrs. Blanchard queried, laying her hand on Janet's shoulder, for she had never been taught to dread the result of coddling the reserved and undemonstrative young girl.

"No," Janet said quaintly; "Janet is n't tired. I rather think she's lonesome."

"Go and rout out Irene and take her for a walk," Sidney suggested practically. "If Wade gets a letter, every day, he need n't expect to find them two hours long."

But Jack had let the last of the skein slip through his fingers, then had risen.

"And Jack's tired of sitting still," he cut in suddenly. "Come along, Janet; let's go for a good long walk."

Sidney looked after them with unenvying eyes, as they went tramping down the street.

"Is n't that just Jack?" she asked herself. Then she added, also to herself, "I think I'll take that young cousin of mine in hand, to-night, and give him a heart-to-heart which includes a few new notions about girls. He has n't given Janet ten consecutive minutes of his time since he came; and it's not fair, when they used to be such chums."

However, somebody else was taking Paul in hand, just then, taking him with a grip that defied all his efforts to relax it.

"I recollect myself now," Paul had said, as he and Amy turned down the sunny street. "At least, my notebook recollects me. I was taking down the address of the costume man, and I found the street where the kidlet abides, Sainte Thérèse."

"Where is that?" was Amy's not unnatural question.

"Down hill somewhere. We'll take the first car that comes, and ask the conductor."

"I know better than that," Amy asserted. "We need a Saint Roch's car; then we can transfer. Apparently your baby abides in the slums."

Paul surveyed her quizzically.

"Did you happen to notice his haberdashery?" he asked.

And Amy admitted the pertinence of the question.

Down hill accordingly they went, and there, by dint of transfers and of many questions, they made their way to Rue Sainte Thérèse, and the baby. They found the street one of a snarl of little by-ways which threaded a wilderness of tiny houses, all gables and dormers and copper roofs, houses whose front doors opened out into the street above a single oilcloth-covered step, houses whose windows were as tightly sealed as if the season had been winter, not July. They found the baby, blue overcoat and all, sitting in a frowsy wicker carriage and uttering spluttery remonstrances at the street in general. Save for a faceless rag doll seated by his side, he appeared to be alone. Nevertheless, he promptly resented the friendly greetings of his erstwhile nurse. Amy added her efforts at conciliation to those of Paul.

"Baby! See! See ze pitty," she adjured him, as she held up a shining toy. "See ze pitty itty sing we's brought oo."

Baby fists and baby voice smote the air simultaneously. When he could make himself heard, —

"You're on the wrong track," Paul advised her. "Perhaps he thinks you're too gushing with him. Best be a little more coy."

There was an interval of coyness, while they stood at a respectful distance and slowly unpacked a scar-

let tin horse and a purple rubber ball from the bundle on which Jack had made comment. The baby eyed them with supercilious gravity. So long as they maintained a proper distance, these strange grown-ups were welcome to amuse themselves in any way they chose. However, as soon as, horse and ball in hand, they approached his frowsy chariot, he resumed his hostile demonstrations towards them. Paul drew off in manifest alarm.

“By Jove! He’s fairly frothing at the mouth,” he said hurriedly. “He’ll do himself some sort of harm, have a shock or something. What an orator he’ll make in time, though! Just see him pound the air at all the proper pauses. But, I say, this is awful. We’ll have the fire department out, if this keeps on. There must be some way to switch off the motor.”

“How did you do it, coming up?” Amy asked unkindly.

“I did n’t — much. The porter told me to jounce him up and down, and it did a little good. I’d do it now, only I don’t see where we could get a fair grip. He’s all strapped up into this go-cart, you see, and he’s ready to fight us like a — a — ”

“Spunky baby.” Amy capped his phrase for him. “What if we ride him down the street a bit? It may quiet him.”

“Good scheme!” Paul approved. “It’s fairly safe, too, for he’s lashed too tight to get at us, if we stay well behind him. A change of scene is

always good for the nerves; the doctor sent my mother to Los Angeles, when she had nervous prostration."

Amy's answer was unfeeling.

"At this rate, we'll soon be candidates for Patagonia. Let's try my plan, and ride him down the street."

The plan worked well. The baby's interest in the journey absorbed him to such a point that he neglected to notice the nature of his motive power, and he subsided into placid gurglings. Above his unconscious head, Paul and Amy exchanged nods of satisfaction, as they slowly trundled him along the sunshiny street. At the corner, Amy raised her brows; Paul nodded. Smiling in full enjoyment of their stratagem, with the baby booing and spluttering at the shiny windows of the houses and at a scavenger dog who sniffed at him, they rounded the corner, too intent upon their friendly plan to note the little old man just dashing out of a doorway, farther up the street, to heed the shriek of mingled rage and fury which he sent echoing after them. Even had they heeded, the shriek would have conveyed nothing to their academic ears. It was in French; but not the French of Paris, nor yet of the American college type.

A moment later, Paul glanced backward over his shoulder. Then he quickened his pace.

"I say," he remarked, while he laid his hand beside Amy's on the bar of the carriage; "I think



perhaps we'd better hurry up. There seems to be some sort of a row back there, and we don't want to get mixed up in it. Suppose we dodge around that corner over there and lie low?"

The carriage balked at the crossing; but they made their corner and entered a street, named, to be sure, yet possessing all the attributes of a blind alley. Once there, Amy slowed her step; but Paul cast a second glance over his shoulder.

"Well, by thunder!" he said. "We appear to have steered into the cyclone's path. Here, let's dive into this back-yard place, and let it whirl past us."

The carriage balked again, then entangled itself in the entrance to the back-yard place. Before Paul could assume the helm and change the course, the cyclone had whirled down upon them, a shouting, gesticulating crowd. In the front rank came the little, shabby old man, and a fat little French policeman, all badge and moustache and shining hat; and, to Paul's intense surprise, instead of dashing on past them, the entire mob swept upon them, as if the objective point of the whole mad rout had been himself and Amy, and the blue-overcoated baby in his frowsy chariot.

For a moment, there was silence, a silence full of expectation, since neither the mob nor its object appeared to know just what would happen next. The silence ended, when the policeman shut his law-gloved hand on Paul's right arm, ended in a babel of strident French that defied Paul's ears.

For one short instant, Paul's gray eyes flashed, and he lifted his arm with the full intention of cuffing the little Frenchman soundly. Then he remembered the might of the law, dropped his arm and lifted his voice persuasively.

"Not guilty!" he said cheerily. "What in thunder is the matter? You'll get a sun-stroke, you-all, if you keep on exciting yourselves like this. What do you want, anyhow?"

The babel kept on, more noisy, more hostile with every moment. In the midst of it, the little man ended his utterances with a culminating yelp of anger, sprang forward, tore the carriage out of Amy's grasp and made off with it up the street, while the clamour changed from menaces to plaudits. Under cover of the shrieking, Paul turned to Amy, rage and amusement struggling for mastery in his honest eyes.

"Well, I am blessed," he said slowly; "if I don't believe they think we were trying to kidnap their blasted baby!"

"What? No! Yes! Do explain it to them," Amy begged.

"I don't believe I can," Paul confessed.

"Don't you speak French?"

"Perfectly; but not the sort they speak up here. I shall have to leave you to do the talking."

Amy shook her head.

"I only know two words, *oui* and one other, and I forget now just what the other was," she answered

hilariously, for the whole situation seemed to her intensely comic.

Paul, however, foresaw a possible change to tragedy, or, failing that, to melodrama. Swiftly he sought the dusty corners of his mind in the hope of discovering a few stray wisps of his sub-freshman French. Discovered, however, they took some time and care, before they could be fitted to each other and to the present crisis.

"You wait," he said at last. "You rest a moment there, and I speak the whole story."

The officer pricked up his ears. He was town-born, not habitant; and Paul's accent was better than his vocabulary. He pricked up his ears; then he let off a volley of accusing French in reply.

Paul let the volley die away to silence. He was too wary to waste his energy on a wholly impossible attempt to understand. Instead, he utilized the time to frame his next sentence. He framed it with a glibness that astounded himself, astounded Amy, astounded even the chubby officer who, taking it for granted that Paul's fluency was more than skin deep, launched forth upon another tide of French which plainly ended in a question.

For reasons wholly obvious, Paul forebore to answer the question. Amy jogged his attention a little mercilessly, for even upon her gayety it was dawning that, in time, the situation might lose some of its more comic phases.

"Why don't you tell him?" she inquired, in manifest rebuke.

"Tell him what?"

"Why — I don't know," Amy answered vaguely. "Whatever it is he wants to know."

This time, Paul's chuckle was irrepressible.

"I will," he responded glibly. "I'm only waiting for you to tell me what it is. I've done my fair share in the talking; now it's up to you to understand."

Amy turned to face the crowd, now looking on in expectant curiosity.

"Is n't there somebody here who speaks a little English?" she demanded.

Only a murmur answered her, a murmur of negation, punctuated by shrugs and disdainful smiles. Paul, at her side, read the faces around them like an open book.

"No go," he said. "We're marooned in a sea of French. All we can do is to drift till we sight an English craft."

Amy laughed as unconcernedly as if she had been sitting on the Leslie steps.

"I really believe I shall come to admire your metaphors as much as I do your slang," she said.

"Think it over and decide," Paul advised her coolly. "Meanwhile, from the way this minion of the law is plucking at my elbow, I infer he wants to have me go somewhere with him. If you've

nothing better to do, you might as well come along and see the situation through."

There was silence for a moment. Then Amy's laugh, hearty and infectious, bubbled up and over.

"Paul Addison," she said, when she could speak; "I verily believe we've gone and got ourselves arrested."

## CHAPTER SIX

JANET and Jack came back from their walk, Rob and Day from their drive and Amy Browne from her shopping. Luncheon was cooked and served and eaten, and still there was no sign of Paul and Amy Pope.

"Where can those children be?" Janet wondered for the third time, as they left the table.

And, for the third time, Mrs. Blanchard replied tranquilly, —

"Don't worry, Janet. Boys always come home, when they begin to get hungry."

Day nodded across at Jack, who was standing at attention behind his mother's chair.

"Your present habits developed early, Jackie boy?" she asked audaciously, and Janet's question was swamped in a rising tide of chaff.

The question repeated itself over the tea and Sally Lunn, however, repeated itself and was accorded a more serious discussion. It repeated itself again at dinner, this time to be met with grave and anxious faces. By now, there seemed no reasonable cause that Paul and Amy should prolong their absence any further. True, both of them were inveterate jokers; yet neither one of them ever had been known to carry a joke beyond the limits of

courtesy and good taste. The girls were still inclined to treat the matter as a foolish freak; but Jack looked grave, Rob openly alarmed.

It was Mrs. Blanchard who finally broke in upon the aimless discussion.

"Jack?" She spoke decidedly.

"Mother?"

"As soon as you have finished your dinner, dear, I think you'd better go out and make a few inquiries."

Sidney looked up, a world of trouble in her eyes.

"You think it is as bad as that?" she asked, while her thoughts flew off to Boston and her aunt.

Mrs. Blanchard touched the girl's hand reassuringly.

"I only think it may be, and that's the reason I want Jack to find out that it is n't."

Already Jack had risen to his feet.

"I've had all the dinner I care for. I think I'll go at once. Will you come, too, Rob?"

Rob rose irresolutely, glancing from Mrs. Blanchard to Day, and then to Sidney.

"Unless they need me here."

"Go on," Day urged him. "Two heads are always better than one, and we are all right. There's nothing we can do but worry, and we really don't need masculine assistance in doing that."

"Why don't you telephone from here?" Janet called after them.

But Jack shut the outer door too soon to allow

himself time to answer. He saw no reason to inform Janet that the direction taken by his telephonings might not be reassuring.

"You think something is wrong?" Rob asked briefly, as they swung out into the darkening street, where the gray shadows seemed loath to vanish before the coming of the electric lights.

Jack nodded, as he fitted his stronger stride to the pace of his companion.

"I've been thinking so for some time," he answered quite as briefly.

"You did n't say so."

"What was the use of stirring up a panic? As long as daylight lasted, I thought they might be off on an impromptu picnic."

"And now?"

"I don't know what to think."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going straight to headquarters — literally."

"You mean?"

"I'm going to put the police on the track."

"Oh, I say, I would n't do that, yet-awhile," Rob remonstrated, with extreme disfavour.

"Why not?"

"It sounds so — so criminal. Besides, it may get into the papers."

"Not here. Not if we object. Canadian papers can be muzzled, if one knows how to go to work."

In spite of his anxiety, Rob laughed, while he



studied with admiring eyes the resolute profile of his friend. Then he laid his hand on that friend's arm.

"Jack," he said; "I believe you're as much a Canadian as ever."

The resolution softened, lighted into kindly liking. Then, half unconsciously, Jack shortened step.

"I'm going too fast for you, old man," he said. "Let's slow down a bit. Canadian? Yes. Why not?"

There came a pause, short, wellnigh imperceptible. Then Rob answered, with an accent rarely used from man to man, —

"Merely because we'd rather have you altogether one of us."

At police headquarters, events transpired, and swiftly. In fact, according to Jack's present mood, it would have been a bold man who suggested a delay; and even the unrolling of red tape was hurried by his masterful dictation. They entered the doorway of the great stone building in a mood as bleak and gray as the outer walls. Half an hour later, they were back in the street, smiling and talking buoyantly, while they awaited the leisurely coming of a Saint Roch's car.

"Best telephone to the house," Rob advised, as they came down the stone steps of the city hall.

Jack nodded.

"Only don't be too hopeful," he advised. "We don't want to stir them up for nothing. Tell them

we think we have a clue, and hope we're on the right track."

"You don't think there's chance for any doubt?"

"I should n't; only it sounds so totally impossible."

"It's the impossible that happens," Rob made assent. "After the which original utterance, I'll go inside this shotheary pop, and telephone to Day."

In all truth, it did seem impossible, this clue which both boys believed to be the right one. There had been a few uncertain moments in the office of police headquarters, moments of apparently futile discussion which had taxed to the uttermost Jack's French and Rob's patience. Then the fluttering of official leaves had been followed by much telephoning, of which Rob could not make out a single word. Bit by bit, however, he had gathered its import from the changes in Jack's face, as he stood listening to the nearer end of the conversation. Then, when the telephoning had ceased, Jack turned to Rob in hasty explanation of its substance.

"He says they've got a pair of people down in the Saint Sauveur station that may be Paul and Amy. I told him it was n't possible; but I have a sneaking fear it may be."

"What in thunder — In the station — What are they doing there?" Rob gasped, in blank amazement, blanker consternation. "What can have happened to them, Jack?"

"He says they were picked up and run in, this morning, charged with kidnapping a baby."

"A ba-by! Oh, for the love of Moses!" And, to the surprise of the official at the desk, Rob went off into peal after peal of laughter. "It's that Paul," he gasped, when he could find his voice. "He's got 'em again, Jack; this is the second time. It must be a form of brain disease, like kleptomania, only this specializes on babies."

It was no especial wonder that Jack looked mystified. In the short time since his arrival, no one had thought to acquaint him with the circumstances under which they all had first seen Paul.

"It sounds like them, really, Rob," he urged swiftly, as if to forestall the continued chaffing of his friend whom he judged to be indignant at the suspicion fallen on his comrades. "They both are tall, both evidently Americans. The girl has on a wide white hat with what he calls a wreath of feathers; the boy is wearing gray clothes and a dark green tie, and —"

"Sure! They're it, all right," Rob assented tranquilly. "I don't need any other proof, Jack; their occupation is quite enough."

"And neither one speaks any French," Jack ended, as if he had not heard the interruption.

"Likely not. Few of us do, judged by these local standards. Well, if you're ready, let's proceed to bail them out." And, his hands in his pockets and his face all one comprehensive smile, Rob sauntered

out of the police headquarters, followed by Jack who obviously was inclined to take the matter far more seriously.

They found the culprits sitting side by side upon a bench in the open office of the station, totally engrossed in playing cat's cradle with the string that had tied up their ill-fated toys. Beside them on the floor, the toys were stacked in a neat pile, while the paper lay across them, covered from end to end with the hieroglyphs of tit-tat-too. Comfortable, impenitent, hilarious, they glanced up at the sound of approaching steps.

"My sainted conscience! It's the pampered idol! And we were going to step on his toes," Paul muttered swiftly. "I rather think, though, it's his turn to score." Then, as the glass door swung open, and their two rescuers came within hail, he added jauntily, "So glad to see you! You've come just in the nick of time, for we've used up all the means of entertainment at our disposal, and even this string is getting worn a little thin." And, rising, he held out his hand to assist his companion to her feet.

"But why the mischief did n't you telephone us?" Rob demanded, while Jack was making prolix explanation at the desk.

Paul laughed carelessly.

"Do you suppose I was going to lose such a good chance to study police court conditions?" he demanded in return. "I've put in the day, getting material for next term's economics. Besides," he

added nonchalantly; "Amy did n't succeed in getting together French enough to explain that some chap had made off with my money and I could n't raise enough even to operate their confounded old slot machine. Smith is n't very strong in languages," he ended pointedly, with the white of one eye turned upon his companion in disgrace.

"Paul," Sidney said, as they left the table, the next morning; "you are going to take a walk with me."

"When?"

"Now."

"What for?"

"Because I am your cousin."

Paul whistled.

"You'd better take Amy. She was the one that really stole the infant."

"I did not," Amy contradicted promptly.

"Who suggested making off with him?" Paul asked her pointedly.

"I did; but that was only to quiet him down, after you had made him cry."

"Well, I like that," Paul was beginning, when Sidney interposed.

"I really don't see how this concerns the case in hand, Paul. I invited you to go to walk, not to —"

Paul interposed in his own turn, making, the while a rueful face at Amy.

"That's the very thing. Do you suppose a fellow has lived as long as I have, and not found out it

always means a lecture when a relation asks to see him by himself? I thought you were above taking such a mean advantage, Tids; but I suppose you have caught it from Wade. It used to be a favourite trick of his."

"Tids?" Amy challenged.

Paul smiled ingratiatingly in the direction of his cousin.

"It's what I used to call her, years and years ago," he explained, in a stage whisper. "Now and then I find these little old pet names work wonders in staving off a moral crisis."

But Sidney, hearing, laughed and shook her head. Nevertheless, she bided her time until the Leslie house and Louis Street were far behind, and she and Paul were strolling lazily along the footpath leading up the glacis and on around the wall. It was a hazy day, gray and sunless, and the breeze swept across the heights above the river, bringing in its freshness the tang of the northern forests hidden away beyond the encircling ring of hills. At their feet, the city rolled away from the higher buildings in the foreground to the distant huddle of roofs beside the Saint Charles valley; and, beyond the last roofs of the city, beyond the little, winding river, the wide blue valley stretched away, farm-dotted, village-spotted, until, in its turn, it rolled upward once more to join the lower slopes of the purple Laurentides. It was the first time Paul had found the footpath, and he wandered on along it in a con-

tented silence, hands in the side pockets of his coat, cap on the back of his head and his lips ready for the whistling which, for the present, did not come. Then suddenly he turned and glanced at his cousin who was strolling by his side, her eyes on the turf before her, a little frown between her brows.

"Let her go," he bade her abruptly.

"Her? Who?" Sidney looked up blankly.

"Oh, any old. I can see I'm in for it, so we may as well have it over," he made unexpected answer.

He was fully prepared for her laugh; not, however, for her words that followed.

"Paul, you are a fickle soul."

"Mayhaps. But why? Not with you, sure," he defended himself swiftly; and Sidney, had she been holding her gaze fixed on him, and not upon the grass before her, would have been astonished at the boyish liking in his honest eyes.

"You know I did n't mean that, Paul," she responded quickly. "We began just where we left off."

Again his glance sought hers.

"That is, if we ever did leave off, Tids. I am no letter-writer, and so are n't you; but I don't imagine that has made much difference between us."

"Not a bit. Not one bit. But — whom did you come here to play with, Paul?"

"You," he answered promptly.

"Yes, of course." There was a little hesitation in her tone, for which Sidney rebuked herself sharply

and at once. In her loyalty to the Argyles and Jack, perhaps she had given too little thought to the possible devotion of this young cousin. Little by little, in the past three or four years, she had absorbed the opinion of Wade Winthrop that Paul was a youngster, a mere child of an epoch totally different from her own. After all, he was only two years younger than herself. Janet Leslie was the same age, and Sidney never professed to regard her as too young for comradeship. However, she pulled herself out of her self-reproachful reverie, and returned to her main theme. "Yes, of course. But who else?"

Paul chuckled.

"It looked, yesterday, as if Amy Pope were to be about to be the favoured individual," he answered.

Sidney permitted herself to be lured into a digression.

"You both of you ought to have been put to bed without your suppers," she said severely.

Paul chuckled again.

"We came mighty near it. I fancy we would have been, if it had n't been for Jack. Confound the fellow! Where did he pick up the lingo, anyhow?"

"He used to —"

"Yes, I know the fable. It sounds like one of the moral tales I used to read, when I was a youngster, on Sunday afternoons. Even then, I used to prefer Indians. But it does n't necessarily imply that he was also a linguist," he added, harking back to his main theme.



"Everybody who comes here has to speak French."

"Not on your life," Paul asserted. "Ask Amy Pope. Besides, this is n't French; it's dago-ese. However, he had it pat; he was no time at all in having it out with the Bobby at the desk, and in having us out of our shackles at the same time. But, Sidney Stayre, I warn you —"

"Well?" Sidney broke his ominous pause.

"I warn you that, if you ever let on to old Wade that his infant brother got himself arrested on suspicion of helping to kidnap a Canuck baby —"

Sidney interrupted; but her assurance was far from reassuring.

"I sha'n't have to. Irene has probably told him already."

Paul stared at her in speechless disgust. Then, —

"Irene!" he exploded.

"Yes. She writes to him, every morning. Of course, she'll tell him."

"Oh!" There were volumes in the tone. Then Paul departed along another track. "Sidney," he said; "I don't know what to make of Janet Leslie."

Sidney controlled her voice as best she could, lest it betray her pleasure at his choice of subject.

"How do you mean?" she queried, as she idly picked a daisy from the turf at her feet.

"We used to be such chums at Grande Rivière. Now I can't make her out at all."

"Have you tried?"

The question was a bit more curt than Sidney had intended, and Paul flushed hotly. When he spoke, his voice was full of boyish trouble.

"Then you've noticed, too?" he asked.

"Noticed what?" she said evasively, for she had been unprepared for the trouble in Paul's voice and in his friendly eyes, and she wanted to gain time to grasp the fact that Paul's avoidance of Janet, all those last two days, so far from being accidental, had been of his own choice.

"You never used to dodge like that, Tids," he rebuked her. "Noticed that we — we don't get on together."

Sidney ceased to dodge, and came directly to the point.

"Have you and Janet had a fuss?" she queried.

He shook his head, then gave his cap a vicious tweak.

"Hang it, no! It takes two to make a fuss, and I have n't been able to get in fussing distance of Janet, since I came."

"Janet is always quiet," Sidney said, in attempted explanation.

"She can talk fast enough with Blanchard."

"He is a Canadian, too."

"Hm! Or with Argyle."

"Rob spent a winter in their house, you know," Sidney explained again.

"That's not my fault," Paul mutinied. "So did I spend a summer with her, if it comes to that."

That's no reason, though, that she should sort us out, sheep and goats, and make me — "

"Well?" Sidney urged him, when the pause had lengthened.

"The goat," Paul ended, and there was a falling cadence to the word which was comically incongruous with its literal meaning. Then he looked up sharply. "Tids, Janet Leslie does n't like me one little bit."

"What makes you think so?" Sidney parried, wondering, the while, just how far it was fair to betray Janet's real attitude towards the boy beside her.

"She looks at me edgewise, and then removes herself, with her chin stuck up in the air," Paul responded, with an accuracy of description which spoke well for his powers of observation.

Unhappily, however, his powers were only skin deep, as Sidney undertook to convince him.

"It's only Janet's way," she said.

"Then Janet's way is a mighty disagreeable one, according to my notion," he made prompt answer. "There's no especial reason, as far as I can see and after our old larks together, that Janet should do the haughty lady in my presence. She used to be up to anything, a good deal like Miss Pope; now she is as prim as a Dutch doll. Look here, Sidney," again the honest gray eyes met hers; "Wade and I both thought it would be a good scheme for me to come up here, this summer. I was sure I was going to have a corking good time; but, now I'm here,

I'll be hanged if I don't wonder whether I'm not in the way."

"Paul! What nonsense!"

"It is n't nonsense," he answered firmly; "it's just Janet. The rest of you are all right. Even the Dame," he chuckled at the memory; "called me *Laddie*, this very morning. But, after all, it's Janet's house; in a sense, I'm Janet's guest and, what's more, I'm not a welcome one."

His words fell into a silence that lasted long, so long that Sidney, her eyes fixed upon the hillocks of the ancient battle-ground, appeared to have forgotten his last words. When she spoke, however, her own words disproved the doubts of her memory.

"Paul," she said slowly; "it's horrid to be gossiping with a boy about another girl. Still, you are my cousin, not just an ordinary boy at large, and I suppose that does make a difference."

"Rather!" Paul interpolated swiftly.

"Yes, it does. I can say things to you I would n't say to anybody else but Wade, — and Rob, perhaps. Janet is n't like the rest of us. She used to be more so; but she's had bad times since then, and they have changed her, made her less ready to take her friends on trust. Besides, she is a Canadian; and, after all said and done, there is a difference. We don't think it's indecent to be a little demonstrative now and then. Janet does. She is reserved and shy. At Smith, all the first year, she had a horrid time because she persisted in waiting for other people

to come three quarters of the way, and then she sulked because they did n't do it. She's got over the sulking part; but she still waits, and that is what she is doing now with you. You can believe me or not, just as you choose; but I really do know Janet Leslie through and through. I know she has been making a lot of plans for your coming, counting a lot on it; but she would have died, rather than say so. Now you're here, she is disappointed that you don't get on together, more disappointed a good deal than you are. By good rights, you ought to be chums. It is her fault that you are n't; but it's you that will have it all to do."

"And if I don't?"

"Then you'll stay just where you are, without budging one single inch," Sidney answered quickly.

"Hang it all!" Paul burst out. "What is it that you think I am going to do?"

"Take Janet by the horns," Sidney answered, in a sudden outburst of metaphor.

"And get myself gored? Thanks."

Sidney shook her head at the targets of the rifle ranges.

"You won't," she predicted confidently.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

“**W**HERE is — ” the speaker clung to the word, while she hunted through the chaos in her lap; “the yellow silk?”

“It’s here. Catch.”

“Thanks.” Amy shut her hand on the flying spool. “And has anybody some extra satin?”

“Yes, two yards. I had a lavish fit, when I ordered it,” the other Amy assured her. “To be sure, mine is pink. Will that make any difference?”

“None to speak of. Still, I think I won’t use it, all things considered.”

“How about mine?” Sidney asked, from between the pins that filled her mouth, for she was kneeling on the floor in front of Day, shortening a trailing satin skirt to its proper length.

“Yours is sulphur; mine is lemon. Amy Browne, where did you get that lovely, lovely lace front?”

“Out of a remnant and six yards of bargain-counter ribbon. I made it, last night. While you and Paul were frivolling on the terrace, I sat at home and plied my needle,” Amy Browne responded virtuously.

“While Jack read Kipling with annotations to an admiring audience of one,” Day interpolated, over

her shoulder. "Sidney, I am at the inside end of that last pin. Do you mind moving it a little?"

Amy Pope pursued her investigations.

"How many — many crinolines is anybody going to have in its petticoat?"

"Two," Amy Browne responded.

"Three," Sidney insisted, with decision. "It will hang better so."

"Thank goodness, I'm to be on horseback!" Day put in. "I never could manage one of those hogs-heads of skirts."

"Day! How inelegant! Do call it a pig's-pate," Rob's voice remonstrated from the hall. "I say, may I come in?"

"Yes, if you won't sit on things," Day told him.

"Is a chair a thing? Because, if 't is, I think I'd rather stay outside." Nevertheless, he came in and took possession of a chair.

With a little shriek, Amy Browne snatched a handful of pink satin breadths from across the chair-back, just as Rob settled his eight score pounds against it.

"Rob, do get up. You're sitting on something else," Sidney besought him hastily.

Without troubling himself to rise, Rob investigated the brown paper parcel which served as cushion.

"It's only a bundle of shiny stuff and a pumpkin-coloured sleeve," he replied serenely. "I'm not hurting them, and a fellow must sit somewhere."

"Not on my sleeve, though." Sidney fell upon

it and smoothed it out with anxious care. "Do see what's in the bundle, Rob."

"Paul's purple pajamas," Rob answered alliteratively, as he held them up. "Won't he be, to use his own vernacular, a corking sight, when he gets these on?"

"Paul is very slangy," Janet observed thoughtfully, from the corner where she sat working in a sea of pale rose silk.

"It goes with the epoch, Janet," Rob told her.

"Also with the nationality," she made impersonal response. "You Americans are always given to so much slang."

"That is the reason our language is so rich," Rob retorted promptly. "We are constantly mining in the depths of — of —"

"The alphabet?"

"The slums?"

Amy Pope and Janet made the suggestions at the same instant. Rob chose the former.

"Thanks. The alphabet, for new material. To be sure, like all other mining, we don't do the work ourselves. We leave that for the sophomore of the fresh-water college, and then we appropriate the output and — Hullo, Irene! I didn't observe you till just now. What doing?"

"I am darning the stockings of the entire community," Irene answered from the deep windowseat where she had perched herself. "In the meantime,



I am thanking my lucky stars that I have a Wade to play with, and am therefore not in the pageants. Not one of these girls would think she could make herself a plain gingham frock; and look — ”

“ Irene! ” Sidney interrupted. “ I made nine, this summer. ”

“ Trot ’em out, ” Rob advised her. “ You don’t look it, Sidney; and Irene is in a mood to take nothing on trust. ”

“ They were n’t all mine, by any means. The twins and Phyllis got them, all but one. That happens to be the one I ’m wearing now. ” Sidney rose, as she spoke, and brushed the clippings of satin from her chambray gown.

Rob studied her admiringly for a moment, studied her firm, erect pose, her laughing face, her steady eyes. He studied even her gown which seemed in some way a part of her personality, as if, in colour and in cut, another would have been incongruous. Then, his scrutiny and his gravity alike ended, he renewed his chaff.

“ When I grow up and be a nice young lady, ” he announced; “ I shall be like Irene, and sew only useful things, like towcloth and black stocking heels. What were you remarking, Day? ”

“ That I want you to see how fine I look. ” And she turned herself about for his approval.

He gave it unreservedly, as he always did give it to Day. None the less, he sought to modify it by his words.

"I think I have observed before, Day, pretty is as pretty does. You look very nice and neat; but you are as vain as a young peacock. I expect you'll take to pawing the ground with your hind heels, as they do in the minuet. Here, stand still, you thing of beauty! How do you suppose we are going to observe you properly, if you hop about like that?"

Indeed, Rob spoke truly. In her dress for the court of Francis First, Day was a thing of beauty and of girlish charm. The skirt hung about her in heavy folds of pale green satin; the bodice was velvet of a darker green, with puffed sleeves and a high, stiff collar which framed her plump young throat and rose to form a striking background for her eager face and for the high-piled masses of her hair. A bit of lace softened the edges of the wide, square neck, and a string of cairngorms set in silver added the needed touch of contrast to her pretty costume.

"It really is becoming, Day." Irene slid out of her windowseat and joined the group at the other end of the large room. "I can't see why, though," she added thoughtfully.

Day laughed.

"Take it out of me, dearie; do," she urged, with perfect good temper. "Anybody can wear green."

"Anybody can't, then," Janet protested suddenly. "Did you ever see me try it?"

But Irene spun about sharply, and faced the trim,

dark little figure in the sea of rose-pink breadths whose faint reflection was lighting the face above into more than a hint of brilliant beauty.

"After this, we don't want to see you in anything but pink, Janet," she said decidedly. "Once for all, it settles my bridesmaid colour, for the others can wear it, and you must. It was providence that gave you that pink group for yours."

Janet laughed.

"Providence, or Gladys?" she asked. "For my part, I suspect it was the latter, for Gladys is more potent than most people are aware. Her father is backing the whole thing."

"Who is to be your final partner, Janet?"

"A new Englishman who has just come out. I have n't seen him yet; but Gladys says he is nice and dances adorably. I also hope he can talk, though, if we are expected to look interested, in all the pauses."

"Englishmen never talk," Day said serenely. "Their looks don't belie them, either; they look unutterable."

"Insufferable, you mean," Rob corrected her. "Say it out, Day; Jack is reading the papers, downstairs."

Day's correction came swiftly.

"Jack is n't English," she said; "he's us."

"Before that, he was n't English, but Canadian," Janet offered further correction.

Rob laughed tolerantly.

“*“ Oh, Canada! Our fathers’ land of old,  
Thy brow is crowned — ’”*

he hummed. “It’s all the same thing, Janet. What I deplore about you all is your beastly loyalty. Has anybody seen Paul?”

“Poor Paul!” Sidney’s tone belied the pity in her words. “By some mistake, they sent him scarlet lacings for his shoes, and he’s gone to see about changing them.”

“I’d have worn them as they were,” Rob said, as he shook out the purple trunks and hose that still dangled across his knee. “A touch of colour would have gladdened this half-mourning.”

“Amy’s frock will do that,” the other Amy told him.

“Amy Pope? Is she dancing with him?”

“Of course,” Amy Browne made answer tranquilly, and, as she spoke, Sidney cast a hasty glance at Janet.

In the week that had gone by since her walk with Paul upon the glaciis, it had seemed to Sidney that there had been a suggestion, now and then, of something verging on the old relation between Janet and her cousin. Years before, during the one summer they had spent together at Grande Rivière, Paul and Janet had been rare chums. Equally matched in age, they had been just as equally matched in their appetite for out-door sports, for teasing, rollicking fun. They had fished, and tramped the mountain trails, and ridden on the floating logs; they had lost

themselves in the bush, and had had drenchings times without number. They had squabbled ceaselessly, but in a jovial sort of fashion which ruffled their good temper and their mutual liking not one whit. Then they had gone their ways, the one to luxury; the other, by a sudden change of fortune, to the grinding economy which is so much worse than abject, care-free poverty. In the years since that time, Paul had gained in exuberant jollity in proportion as Janet had gained in reticence. Each, meanwhile, had held closely, all those years, to the memory of the old-time friendship. Each one, now that they had once more come together, was prepared to meet it, not in the mood in which it had been abandoned; but according to the newer phases of his character.

Under such conditions, there was no especial wonder that the meeting had not prospered. Janet, grown starchy in her reticence, starchy and a wee bit critical, had been at no pains to cover her astonishment at the whoop of jovial greeting which Paul sent on before him up the street. And Paul, leaping up the steps to meet her, as she stood there waiting, was plainly as much upset as she had been, when his hearty handshake was received with stiffly outstretched fingers and eyes drooped towards his feet. He could not know that Janet was secretly longing to shut her hand hard over his and to meet his gray eyes squarely, could not know the girlish shyness and self-distrust which held her back from any demonstration. Nor yet could Janet know that this great jolly, slangy

guest of hers had been counting for days upon the quality of the greeting he had every reason to expect, had been hurt to the quick by the quality of the greeting she accorded him.

The longer the anticipations of such a meeting and the shorter the meeting itself, the longer are bound to be its results. If Janet had stuck to her proper place as hostess, Paul would have ended by realizing the welcome hidden under her chilly manner, for the jovial, rollicking fellow was by no means dense. Instead of that, however, Janet had muttered some vague excuse which centred in Mary Browne, and had vanished towards the kitchen, leaving Sidney to do the honours in her stead. By the time Janet reappeared, a good hour later, Paul was so much engrossed with Irene and Amy Pope that he acknowledged the presence of his former chum with the most cursory of nods.

This state of affairs had existed for some days, unnoticed, to be sure, by all the party except three. Those three, Paul, Janet and Sidney, were acutely uncomfortable. The others saw no cause for discomfort, even if Paul accorded to Janet no more attention than he gave to pretty, fluffy Amy Browne. The one by reason of her reticence, the other by her purely ornamental qualities, was plainly no fit companion for a lusty, outspoken youth like Paul. It was far more fitting that he should pair off with Amy Pope, whose energy matched his own.

Paul, being the sort of boy he was, regretted the

situation, but lost no time in idle repinings. He would have preferred to play with Janet. Janet holding herself aloof from him, however, he must take the next best thing that offered. Janet was constituted otherwise. She shut her teeth and went her way, although the present situation was bidding fair to ruin her pleasant summer. And Sidney, the last one of the trio, also shut her teeth. While she shut them, she studied how to go to work to rectify matters. Her talk with Paul had been the result of that study, and it did its work. Before the week was ended, she had the gratification of seeing Paul and Janet starting for rehearsal, side by side, in quite their old way.

By this time, rehearsals were the order of the day, and pageants the central theme of conversation. The quaint old rock-walled city was on the eve of its three-hundredth birthday party, to which a trio of nations had been bidden, on which the eyes of Europe and the western world were bent. And, to entertain the guests, there were to be fireworks and parades, illuminations and, best of all, a series of eight monster pageants reviewing the history of the colony from its babyhood until its present grown-up day.

Everybody was in the pageants, as a matter of course; everybody, that is, who could wear a costume and act a part. It was the simple law of the pageants that everybody should be doing something, a most natural something, at every instant; and to achieve this end with three thousand different actors,

rehearsals must go on unceasingly. Accordingly, day after day, as the afternoon sun dropped westward, the crowd of actors followed westward, too, to gather on the monstrous out-door stage above the river, and go through their parts until the fallen twilight drove them home again to wait for the coming of another day. And meanwhile, morning after morning, all over the city groups of girls were gathered, sewing busily on the gay breadths of satin and silk and velvet which were to form their pretty costumes, while the masculine actors went their accustomed way, relying, sometimes vainly, on the committee who had agreed to furnish forth their finery. Into one such sewing-bee Rob Argyle had penetrated; and now, with Paul's costume dangling across his knees, he sat looking on, advising the others and plainly enjoying himself to the very utmost.

"When do we get a dress rehearsal?" he inquired at length.

"It depends on the pageant we're in," Janet said, as she threaded her needle. "I hear they're going to begin them about a week before, and sell tickets to the last ones."

"A week before. That should be next week," Rob said thoughtfully. "Mother and Wade will be here then. What a shame dad can't come, too!"

Day looked up.

"Want a bit of news, Rob?" she queried.

"Is he coming?"

"For gala day. I heard, this morning; you





“All over the city groups of girls were gathered, sewing busily.” — Page 96.



were n't here, when the letter came. Else, I should have told you."

"Miss Janet," Elsie spoke from the threshold; "Miss Horth is downstairs. She'd like to see you."

Janet started alertly to her feet.

"Gladys? Most likely she has come to tell me something about my Englishman. I'll be down, Elsie, as soon as I can make myself presentable."

However, Janet's interpretation of the word *presentable* was a strict one; and there was a long interval before she did present herself to the waiting guest. The guest, meanwhile, was occupied in staring at the stranger young man who sat at the far end of the room into which she had been ushered to await her hostess. Too much absorbed in his paper to heed the low voices and the light footfall of the guest, he sat there reading on and on, wholly unconscious of his pretty young countrywoman whose gaze was bent on him steadily, approvingly, yet with a hint of question. She saw before her a sturdy, broad-shouldered man of the middle twenties, well-knit, well-dressed, well-groomed. Only his profile was towards her. She could see the strong, sharp lines of the face, the level eye, the shapely chin. She studied the face intently, partly because she was lacking other interest just then, partly because she was held by a baffling resemblance to some one whose identity she could not place.

Then Janet came in, dainty and cordial. At the stir of her coming, the young man looked up, rose,

came forward, was introduced and, after a few words, went his way. Gladys stared after him for a moment. Then, dismissing him, she went directly to the subject of her errand.

"Janet," she burst out eagerly; "I am perfectly content."

"That's good," Janet made calm assent. "What now?"

"Louise Géhanne is ill."

"That's kind of you," Janet retorted.

"Wait. That's not the real reason. Of course, I'm sorry on her account. But, as long as she is out, I am simply, gloriously happy, for you're to have her place in the pageants."

Janet pricked up her ears.

"Her place? Who is she?"

"She is the little French girl who has been doing Champlain's wife. He —" it was thus that the loyal pageanters alluded to their English coach; "has n't liked her acting a bit. He has been asking about you, who you were, and where you trained, and all the rest. He asked my father, and father told me, and — and now we girls are all delighted. We all of us, all the old set, have been wanting you to have a better place. You're one of us, and we're so glad to have you back here again, and all —" In her excitement, Gladys was fast becoming incoherent.

Janet had flushed and paled by turns, and now her breath was coming sharply. In all the pageants, no

one part had appealed to her more than that of the child wife of Champlain, who had come out with him to help to rule the baby city he had founded. It meant much to her that she had been chosen, chosen after she had had a chance to show her powers of acting, to take the part of the dainty little wife. It meant far, far more than that, however, that her old friends, dismissing personal ambition, had willed to have it so. Even then, however, she did not take in all their plan until, her rapture ended, she faced the practical questions of the change.

Meanwhile, Gladys chattered on.

"You'll get a note from him, to-day. He told father he should write to you about it, or else call, himself. You'll do it; won't you, Janet?"

"I'd love it, if there's time to get myself trained for it. Of course, I would n't take it, and spoil the part. But," she paused a little blankly, as the idea flashed upon her; "but what about the costume?"

Gladys smiled serenely.

"That's all settled, long ago. You're coming to our house to be fitted, to-morrow noon. We girls all have finished up our costumes, and mother has sent for Marie to come to help us out." Then, that subject settled, abruptly she shifted to another one. "Janet," she demanded; "who is that Mr. Blanchard?"

"Jack? He's one of our friends who is here with us."

"Yes; but where did you ever know him?"

"He is a friend of the Argyles. Really, he is

Mr. Argyle's secretary; but he lives at their house and goes everywhere with Rob and Day."

"Where did they pick him up?" Gladys persisted.

"Pick him up? Gladys! What do you mean?"

"Only that I'm sure he's the man who used to run the Springfield sleeper, a few years ago. I used to go down with him often; and I knew him again, to-day, as soon as ever he spoke."

For an instant, Janet's face showed her perturbation. She knew the social tenets of her former friends, knew they were rigid and not to be ignored. Then she cast aside the best of the lessons her college life had taught her, and dismissed strict truth for the sake of what seemed to her to be expediency.

"Gladys! What nonsense!" She gave a careless little laugh. "Jack Blanchard is Rob Argyle's dearest friend. You need n't lose your head like that, on the strength of a likeness to a man you never really knew."

And the subject was closed, but not the incident.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

"IS Miss Leslie at home?"

Day, who had met the stranger on the steps, looked up into a shrewd, middle-aged face which somehow won her liking.

"She is n't at home. I'm sorry."

"So am I," the man said, and Day also liked his hearty voice and the finish he gave to all his consonants. "I wanted to see her, this morning, if I could. When will she be at home?" Plainly he expected an invitation to come in and wait.

Day dashed the expectation.

"I am sorry," she repeated. "Miss Leslie has gone for the whole day. She went, last evening, to stay with some friends at Cap Rouge."

"The Blakistons, likely," the man said, as if to himself.

Day smiled. His obvious familiarity with Janet's haunts made so much of cordiality on her part seem safe and possible.

"Yes. She is there. Will you telephone? Or can I take a message for her here?"

"May I come in? Thank you. You are Miss Leslie's friend, one of the friends who came up here with her, that is?"

Day laughed.

"Yes. I'm her business manager," she said as calmly as if her elevation to that office had not been made, that very instant. "Can I do something for you?"

The man laughed in his turn. Then he handed Day a card which bore a name she knew well by local reputation, and an official title high up on the list of sponsors for the coming celebration.

"Yes, do come in," she said, with a total change of accent. "I am Miss Argyle. I have heard all the Leslies speak of you often. You were so good to them in their trouble."

"Mr. Leslie was a friend of mine," the man said briefly. "Now, Miss Argyle, I am in a great hurry, this morning, and I must come to the point. Are you willing, on Miss Leslie's account, to tell me if this house is full?"

Day reflected swiftly, swiftly recalled what she had heard about the coming congestion.

"Comfortably," she made guarded answer.

The face before her cleared a little from under its anxious clouding.

"But not uncomfortably?" His voice was eager.

"Not a bit. The rooms are huge, and we girls are used to piling up, in summer," Day responded.

"Could you put in another one?"

"I?"

"Miss Leslie, of course I mean," the man corrected himself hastily.



"She could. I am not sure she would, however. It might depend somewhat upon the one."

"But there is a room?"

"There is n't now. And two more people are coming, to-morrow." Day forestalled his increasing eagerness.

He rose.

"I am sorry. I had hoped there was a chance that Miss Leslie —"

Day interrupted him, and went straight to the point.

"Just what is it that you want?" she asked directly.

The answer was fully as direct.

"I want a room and board for Lady Wadhams."

"Who is she?"

"She is — Why, she is Lady Wadhams," the man said blankly. "Besides that," he added hastily for Day's enlightenment; "she is sister to —" And he uttered a name known the Dominion over.

"I am so sorry," republican Day said politely; "but I'm afraid I don't know about him, or what he has done. However, the main question is, is Lady Wadhams nice to know?"

"Of course." No types can express the shocked fervour of the accent.

"What makes her want to come here?" Day pursued, with further directness, for she was a little nettled by the accent.

"She does n't. It is my plan for her."

"Why?"

"Because I know the Leslies, and how comfortable she will find the house. And —"

"And?" Day prodded him a little sternly.

"And," something in his glance involuntarily betrayed the fact that he liked this intrepid young American a good deal better than he approved of himself for doing; "and, moreover, there is n't any other suitable place where she can go."

Day smiled. She had extracted the confession for which she had been angling.

"It is very late to be making one's plans," she observed severely.

"Yes; but Lady Wadhams was delayed beyond her expectation." Then, dismissing apology, he came directly to the point once more. "Do you think Miss Leslie could take her in?" he asked.

Day answered with American explicitness.

"It would depend entirely upon what Lady Wadhams was willing to pay for being taken in." But, even as she spoke, she rejoiced that Janet was not present to check the ungarnished bluntness of her speech.

"Ten dollars," the man suggested.

Day shook a scornful head.

"Not enough," she said briefly.

"My dear young lady! But ten dollars a day is all the Château asks."

Day's smile never changed. No need to tell this stranger that she had supposed his offer applied to

the week's rate. Ten dollars a day would be a goodly penny to drop inside of Janet's coffers. She longed to jump upon the bargain, embrace it, clinch it there and then. Instead, she held herself according to her code of dignity.

"Of course," she answered, with a slow thoughtfulness which might accompany a graceful yielding; "its being a person such as Lady Wadhams does make a difference. I think perhaps Miss Leslie — might — for her — I'll speak to Miss Leslie, as soon as she comes in."

Five minutes later, she escorted the caller to the door and watched him make his exit, murmuring gratifiedly to himself. Then, turning, she ran up the stairs, eager to spread her news among the other girls, sewing in the room above.

To her extreme surprise, she found Janet settled at one side of the group.

"I thought you were at Cap Rouge," she exclaimed, too much astonished at Janet's appearing to heed the sudden silence which met her coming in at the open door.

"I was; but am no more," Janet replied composedly.

"But you meant to stay?"

"I did. I changed my mind, though. Old Mrs. Blackiston was taken horribly ill in the night, and I decided that they had enough to do, without entertaining a guest, so I had them send me home, the first thing this morning."

"When did you get here?"

"While you were making yourself agreeable to somebody in the drawing-room."

Day laughed.

"I was agreeable, too. I've been transacting business in your name." And she proceeded to repeat the conversation which had taken place below.

The other girls heard her to the end, with increasing hilarity; but Janet plainly was aghast.

"Day! What have you done?" she exploded, midway in Day's narrative.

"Hush, Janet! Don't interrupt. It's splendid, Day; go on," Irene urged.

"But Lady Wadhams —"

"Who is she, anyhow?"

"A great swell from —"

"I hate that word you English use," Day interrupted, with a little frown. "People can't be divided up like that. They're either nice, or else they are n't; but their niceness is a matter of their brains and their ancestors, not of their butlers and their clothes. Now do listen, Janet. Ten dollars a day! You would n't have let that go?"

"You could n't have afforded to," Amy Pope assured her bluntly.

"But where can we put her?" Janet protested. "The house is full now, and Mrs. Argyle and Mr. Winthrop come, to-morrow, and Mr. Argyle —"

"Nonsense!" Sidney broke in. "Wade is to room with Paul, in any case, and you've saved a

room for Mrs. Argyle, all the time. Give that room to Lady What-you-call-her, put the Argyles into our room, and Day and I will move up and live with you."

"Sidney! You can't. The room is n't large enough for three."

Day took up the word.

"What utter, arrant nonsense! How many times in freshman year did we girls pile in together, just for the fun of the thing? I remember one night, when there were seven of us in Amy's room. What's more, we'll do it now."

"But there won't be a thing for you to sleep on," Janet wailed.

"Move our beds upstairs."

"What about Lady Wadhams?"

Day looked a trifle blank. That aspect of the case had not occurred to her.

"But she can't sleep in more than one bed at once," she urged at length.

"What about the maid?"

"He did n't say anything about a maid."

"Most likely he thought it was n't necessary," Janet retorted a little crushingly. "Anyway, she is sure to have one."

"No matter." Sidney rose, as if to end the discussion. "Day and I will make up beds on the floor. It's no use to protest and make a fuss about it, Janet. Day has given her word, and it is my experience that, when an Argyle says a thing is to

be, not even an earthquake can stop it from happening. Come along, Day, and we'll proceed to plan about our moving."

Sidney's sole motive in rising had not been to end the discussion. More than that, she was anxious to get Day out of the room before any echo of their recent talk came to her ears. For once in her life, Sidney Stayre was thoroughly angry at the turn events had taken, thoroughly vexed with Janet for making them take that turn.

"By the way," Janet had said with utter nonchalance, as soon as a pause followed the greetings which had hailed her unexpected coming; "there's one thing I want to warn you girls about, now we're alone."

"You sound mysterious, Janet," Irene remarked.

"Not mysterious exactly; only I wanted to say it, naturally, when Jack was out of the way. Please be careful, all of you, not to let it out to Gladys Horth that Jack ever ran on a train."

"Why not, I'd like to know?" Sidney demanded shortly.

Janet pursued her theme tranquilly, too much absorbed in making the most of her opportunity to pay any especial attention to Sidney's voice.

"Perhaps, while we're about it, we'd better not say anything to any of the girls up here."

"Why not?" Sidney demanded, for a second time.

Janet glanced up calmly, quite unaware of the storm her words were likely to create.

"Because Gladys is sure she's recognized him. I told her she had made a mistake; not told her, that is, but tried to make her think she had, without exactly fibbing. Still, we don't want it to get about up here, you know."

"Why not?" persisted Sidney.

"Because there's no reason he should suffer for it now," Janet replied, with unabated calm.

"Suffer?"

"Yes. It would be horrid for Jack to have the girls all cutting him, just as he's in the pageants with them, and bound to see them, every single day."

"But why should they cut him?" Sidney's voice was ominous in its level quietness.

"Why, because he used to be a conductor, you know. As a rule, we don't have to dance with them, and drink tea with them, and all that."

"Janet Leslie! You disgusting little snob!" It was Amy Pope who spoke, Amy Pope whose great-grandfather had been Secretary of State in his day, whose father was a man of millions and of highly convoluted brains. For the past five minutes, she had been swelling and reddening with her wrath; yet Sidney, who had watched its coming, was not prepared for any such explosion.

Janet whitened to the lips.

"At least, we don't in Canada," she amended caustically.

Amy's reply was equally caustic.

"Perhaps not. Still, it might depend a little on the sort of man the conductor turned out to be, and whether he was willing to drink tea with you."

Janet smiled a little, and lifted her chin.

"Not with us," she answered smugly.

Amy's colour came a shade more hotly, and she raised her head to reply. Then she checked herself, and merely observed, with slow and cutting emphasis, —

"Then, even more than ever, I thank my lucky stars that I'm not Canadian."

Irene broke in, and hastily. She was as angry as Amy herself; but her three years of extra age enabled her to hold herself in better check, increased, too, her anxiety to prevent any break in the household harmony.

"I am not quite sure I understand you, Janet," she said. "Do you think it would make any difference in Jack's good time up here, if your friends knew he had been —" Illogically enough, her loyalty shrank suddenly from putting the situation into words.

"I don't think. I know," Janet said a little sullenly.

"But why; especially when it was all over with, so long ago?"

"Our friends, as a rule, don't do things like that," Janet responded loftily.

"How much worse is it to be a Pullman car conductor than it is to sit on a stool in a bank, all the



year round, like that little idiot you introduced to me, yesterday?" Amy exploded again. "One is a little narrower quarters than the other, for the conductor gets an occasional change of scene, and he can hide in the baggage car, when his people get too great a bore."

"Do you know what I think about it," the other Amy chimed in suddenly. "If a man behaves himself and acts a gentleman, he can — sweep the streets, for all I care."

Janet turned upon her hotly.

"Rubbish, Amy! You do care! There is n't one of you who does n't draw the sharpest sort of social lines."

"Of course we do," Amy Pope responded. "The only thing is, we draw the lines at the people, not at the work they had to do, once upon a time. Jack is a gentleman. He had to do something all at once, and he took the first thing that came along for him to do. Moreover, he did it well. I don't see what bearing it has upon the present."

"It has n't," Janet conceded. "That's why I want to keep it out of the present."

Irene once more tried to make herself heard.

"You really think," she said; "that, if your friends here knew —"

"They would cut him, the next time they saw him look their way," Janet responded flatly. "What's more, you every one of you would have done the very same thing, yourselves. You took him first, by

way of Day, took her word about him that he was really nice. Of course, when one knows him — ”

But Sidney struck in.

“Do you mean,” she said, after an interval of thought; “that you really — really fibbed to Gladys Horth?”

Janet turned scarlet.

“I did n’t fib, Sidney. I only asked her if she was n’t mistaken.”

“Hm! Same child in another dress,” Sidney commented shortly. “I thought you were above such things as that, Janet Leslie.”

“I did it, for the sake of Jack,” Janet defended herself.

“That is utter nonsense. Jack can stand on his own merits, without any need of your fibbing about him.”

“But I did n’t fib,” Janet protested. “And Gladys is a gossip. It would have been all over town before rehearsal, that very afternoon.”

“Suppose it had?”

“Then nobody would have been nice to Jack.”

“What about us?”

“Oh, us!” Janet’s tone was disdainful.

“Yes, us,” Sidney repeated firmly. “We came up here to play together, you know, not to hang on to other people.”

“But they all were beginning to like Jack,” Janet urged.

“Well, let them go on liking him.”

"And I'm sure they've all been very nice to you."

"Nice enough. Still, we could have lived without them," Sidney answered callously. "I do hope you'll also refrain from telling them that the Stayres keep only one servant, and make all their pickles with their own fair hands, to say nothing of their party frocks."

"Sidney!" Janet faced her, holding her eyes and voice as steady as she could. "I'm sure you're very hard on me."

Yet once again, Irene summoned her extra years to her assistance.

"Janet," she said quietly; "I really think you have mixed up things rather badly for us all; but I do believe you meant it in all loyalty to Jack. If Jack were here, he'd be the first to tell you that there was no disgrace in that old work of his; we all are glad to have him for a friend, even if his was n't the sort of work our brothers ever have happened to do. Those things are a good deal a matter of chance, and we Americans, more than you do, believe an honest gentleman can make himself welcomed anywhere. We girls all think you've made a bad mistake. If your friends wanted to cut Jack, they were welcome; there was no especial sense in your fibbing to prevent it. You have fibbed, according to my notion; and all we can do now, in simple decency, is to stand by that fib to the extent of keeping still. It would only make a bad matter worse, if we were to contradict you."

"You mean, then?" Amy Pope asked bluntly.

"That, for the sakes of both Jack and Janet, all we can do now is to hold our tongues and let matters take their course."

Sidney raised her hand for silence.

"Girls! Girls! Here comes Day upstairs," she warned them hurriedly. "For goodness' sake, don't any of you girls tell her a word about it. She never would forgive Janet, the longest day she lived."

And the girls heeded her warning; but events, as it proved, did not.

## CHAPTER NINE

**A** HUGE grandstand, back to the city and bent to form three sides of a mammoth octagon, faced outward to the river and to the southern hills beyond. Upon its lofty top, a pinnacled pagoda with red hangings awaited the coming of the royal guest. The roof of the royal box formed the platform for the coach where, megaphone in hand, he paced to and fro, to and fro with ceaseless, nervous tread, or halted now and then to hurl his instructions down upon his corps of actors. Behind the grandstand and across an open field whose dusty, trodden turf and border of gaudy booths inevitably reminded one of the entrance to an American circus, behind it and far away, the noise of the city dwindled to a humming silence, more like the droning of a swarm of bees than of a city's bustling life. Before it opened out the stage, hundreds of feet across, a stretch of rolling country dappled with clumps of bushes, edged with forest trees and, at its farther side, dropping sharply over the wooded bluff down to the river, far beneath. And on that very stage, a century and a half before, the rising sun had struck full upon a British army, silently deploying before the outmost barriers of New France, deploying for the battle

which should leave them victors, yet lacking their gallant leader to share their triumph.

There were triumphs of another sort now, triumphs enough and to spare for all the giant corps of actors whose numbers were so nearly equal to those of the thin red line who had marched forth to battle on that selfsame spot. It was no mean achievement they had undertaken and accomplished, this setting forth in less than a dozen different scenes the whole pith and substance of the city's three hundred years of life. The long weeks of preparation were ended, and the celebration was at hand. Of the success of the celebration there was no longer any doubt. Few, however, of the guests, and those only the most thoughtful ones among them, in watching the smooth succession of the scenes, could gain the slightest idea of the careful study which had gone before.

"The actors themselves don't half appreciate the work he's doing," Sidney said impatiently, as they were crossing the street behind the grandstand, on their way to the final dress rehearsal. "They take it all as a matter of course, and accept it calmly. I'd like to put them down behind the scenes at one of our Smith plays. Then they would begin to realize what it has been to keep this crowd in order."

"Doubted," Amy Pope rebelled, as she jumped across a puddle with a bounce out of all harmony with her crinoline. "I defy anybody to get a clear notion of any sort from behind our scenes. They're too chaotic for that."

"But everybody does things here," Day added. "Even that little red child — she's only a baby — in the Phipps scene —"

"It's the costumes," Amy Browne interrupted. "How has he ever found out what they ought to be?"

"British Museum and the War Office," Day said briefly. "What were you remarking, Rob?"

"That this blasted beast of mine refuses to waddle at this pace. Come along, Day. Let's have a canter, and see if we can't quiet him down."

"All right. There's time, and they will behave better after it, I suppose. Come, Jack." And the trio of friends went scampering off towards Sillery.

Amy Pope looked after them with something akin to a sigh.

"I do wish my pony had n't spilled me, when my courage was young and callow," she lamented. "It was my childish dream to be a circus lady, and have pink clothes and a calico charger, and this does really seem the next best thing. Cruel to have it denied to me!"

"Amy!" Janet wakened suddenly from the reverie which had been holding her, ever since she had come downstairs, that noon, gowned in the sombre mauve so curiously out of keeping with the years of Champlain's child wife. "Amy, how can you speak of it like that?"

Amy faced her in honest, good-tempered surprise.

"Like what, dearie?" she questioned blankly.

"Like a circus." There was more rebuke held in the tone, even, than in the words.

"Well, why not? That's just what it is," Amy responded, laughing. "It's a glorious, high-art circus, historical and very splendid."

But Janet shook her head.

"Not on this ground," she answered quietly, and, through her quiet, one felt instinctively that she was listening to the tramp of ghostly feet, the din of ghostly arms and war-shouts. "It might be, in some places; but not here, where every single foot of ground has its own bit of history. How does it make you feel, when those two armies come up together over the cliff and stand there side by side, while the band is playing *God Save the King*?"

"As if I'd like to whistle *Dixie*," Amy made flippant answer.

Paul plucked her by the satin puff which served as elbow.

"Come along here and say 'How?' to Mrs. Argyle," he urged suddenly. "There is a lot of time, and I want old Wade to see my purple clothes some more. What's the use of being elegant, if you can't get yourself envied." And, with a nod to the others, he led the way off at a sharp diagonal to the trail they had been taking. When they were safely out of hearing, "I say, you were getting on thin ice," he warned his comrade. "I've heard Janet go off like that before. This is sacred ground to her, and a sacred subject. Her father had a lot of material



put together when he died, and Janet has more than a notion of turning it into a history, some day or other. I actually believe she thinks that one battle was the greatest one that ever was fought; she looks like a veritable Maid of Orleans, when she talks about it. As for joking about it — I sure thought she'd have you by the throat, before I could get you away."

Amy yawned.

"What sense?" she queried. "Everybody is dead and buried now."

"Yes; but it still seems to be a sore subject, up here," Paul mused. "For my part, I can't see the sense of putting Wolfe and Montcalm up to dance together. Still, I'm only an American, and can't get up the proper thrill. First day I saw it, I laughed."

"It was funny," Amy admitted.

Paul shook his head.

"No," he corrected her; "it was n't. I was only afraid it was supposed to be. With these English chaps, you never really know."

They found Mrs. Argyle, with Wade and Irene beside her, comfortably settled at the left end of the grandstand where Irene was busily engaged in pouring forth the lore she had accumulated during the past three weeks, and in pointing out the major landmarks: the Indian village at the west, the little Don de Dieu rocking on the stream beneath, the crowds of gaudily-dressed actors piling into their

places on the right-hand stand, the helmet of a stray member of Wolfe's army prowling through the underbrush that edged the cliff, the plaster urn being trundled across the stage by a pair of Jackies from the fleet, ready to be rushed on for the Fontainebleau scene, a little later.

"Is this the historic path?" Wade queried, at the end of Irene's harangue from which he had carried away the sole impression that never until then had he appreciated the luminous depths of her brown eyes and the eager expressiveness of her voice.

"Not on your life, Wadeikins!" Paul assured him promptly. "They would n't run any risk of wearing out their best piece of tourist bait. That path catches more shekels than any other fly in their book. It looks a good deal like this; but the looks are only skin deep. I went down it once, so I know, for I fell on top of a heap of shale at the bottom and skinned my nose and my knees. How did it happen you did n't come out here before?"

"I was n't doing any great amount of walking then, you know," his older brother reminded him.

"True, oh, King! One would n't think it now, though, to look at you." And Paul stared admiringly at the slim, well-knit man seated at Irene's other side.

And Paul spoke truly. In Wade Winthrop's present appearing there was nothing to suggest that there had been a time when he had been banished, owner of a pair of suspect lungs, out of his law

office, his social life, his home, to grow as strong as he could in the Canadian mountains, while he faced the possibility of a lasting invalidism that seemed to him to be worse than death. Out of the experience he had brought two blessings, he was wont to tell all comers: health, and the knowledge of his cousin, Sidney Stayre. And Sidney had brought him, by devious ways, to his affianced bride, Irene. That summer, then, directly and indirectly, had completely reconstructed his whole life. Before that, he had been a Boston lawyer, a little too tenacious of his own aristocracy, a little too self-centred. Now he was a successful editor of a New York daily, a man of broad sympathies, of ripened knowledge of his fellow men. A sprinkling of gray hairs marked the time of his crossing from one life to the other; and the crossing had been made hand in hand with Sidney.

The girl had come to him out of the vagueness which often veils the family record. She had found him despondent, querulous, totally absorbed in his own invalid concerns. She had swept down upon him without the slightest reverence for his point of view. She had weighed him by the measure of her common sense, and she had found him sadly wanting. By coaxing and coercion she had set herself to work to make good the want, and the waning summer had put upon her work the seal of its approval. Out of it all, Wade Winthrop had emerged, not only healthful, but a man. Of all his kin, no

one now was more his loyal admirer than his half-brother Paul with whom, in past years, Wade had been in almost ceaseless friction. There had been no uncertain welcome in the way, that very noon, Paul's hand had shut on his, before he made way for Sidney and Irene.

Now, seated on Irene's other hand and listening with inattentive ears to her enthusiastic explanations, Paul's gray eyes were fixed on his half-brother with a full approval. What they saw was a trim, well-set-up man of the early thirties, distinctly good to look at by reason of his clean-cut features and his sunny smile. Just now, the smile was all for Irene; but Paul, watching, was quite content to have it so. Was it not that very smile which had won Irene's consent to become his own half-sister?

Mrs. Argyle, meanwhile, was alternately chatting with Amy Pope, and nodding to friends scattered here and there among the audience. A winter in Quebec, a few years before, had won her a cordial welcome at many a fireside in the city, a welcome which had surprised her by the promptness of its renewal when she had come back again, three days ago. Now and then, too, her eyes rested on a New York face, for already the city was beginning to swarm with guests. Then sharply she recalled her attention from Amy's chatter and from the smiling faces of her friends. Already the straggling line of Indians was trooping towards the beach to meet Jacques Cartier and his sailors as, cross on shoulder,

they came singing up the trail. The last rehearsal of the pageants had begun.

Notwithstanding Day's frequent letters filled with bulletins of the pageants' progress, Mrs. Argyle had confessed herself surprised, three days before, when she had stepped from her car at Levis. A dress rehearsal had been appointed for that afternoon, and the Levis wharf was swarming with actors in brave array: Indians, sailors and courtiers, heralds and beef-eaters, soldiers of the armies of Wolfe and Murray and Montcalm. They dotted the crowd upon the ferry; they wandered to and fro in the Quebec streets. They even dashed out from the Leslie house in Louis Street, and fell upon her neck in eager greeting.

"Do give me a little time to get used to you," she begged at last. "There is so much wig and cape about you boys that I can hardly tell you apart. As for you girls —"

"We're lovely," Day supplemented, with a prance of pure rapture which was out of all harmony with a court dress of green satin. "Did you ever see anything quite so dear in all your life?"

Mrs. Argyle laughed.

"I certainly never saw anything quite so astounding," she rejoined. "Do stand in a row, all of you, and tell me who you are, while I take you in. No; not you, Day. You're entirely too crazy-headed in all your finery. Why, Irene child! No costume?"

Irene's answering blush was as becoming as any costume could have been.

"I thought," she said demurely; "I'd stay outside as critic, and as guide to you — and Wade."

Mrs. Argyle's hand upon her shoulder was full of womanly understanding; but she only said, —

"Then guide, please, for I really, in the face of all this gorgeousness, really can't remember who is who."

Accordingly they lined up before her in the order of their appearing, Rob and Day and Jack, all three courtiers of King Francis, the two boys brave, one in vivid blue, the other in dark, dark red, with Day between them in her greens. Next came another group, courtiers also and partakers in the coveted *pavane* danced at the court of Henry Four: Paul in violet trunks and tights, a tinselled cape dangling from one shoulder and a plumed hat in his hand; Sidney and the two Amys in pointed velvet caps and monstrous crinolines. And last of all came Janet alone, dainty and sweet in her prim little purple robes, her jewels and her mirror dangling from her belt, the child wife whom the great Champlain brought out with him from France to rule with him over his city of eighty souls and a few savages.

And Mrs. Argyle, looking little more than a mere girl herself, gave them her unstinted applause. Then she followed them to the door and watched them up the street until they vanished, swallowed

up in the crowd of brilliant costumes that filled the long perspective seen beyond the Louis Gate.

"No," she answered all Rob's urging; "I'm not going out with you, to-day. I shall stay at home and wrestle with my trunks, instead. I don't want to see any of it, until it all is perfect."

And now, the Monday after, it certainly was perfect. Even the coach ceased his nervous tramping and his megaphoned instructions, as the second Cartier scene drew to an end, and the long line of mounted courtiers rode slowly off the field. There came a little pause of expectancy, a little buzz of conversation, and then a roar of applause that shook the stand to its foundations. Out from the right-hand distance behind the stand, there came trotting full half an hundred Jackies from the fleet anchored in the river below the terrace. Outstretched in their midst was a gigantic square of bright blue canvas, spotted over with huge golden fleur-de-lys, a square of canvas that rose and fell and bellied as they came, throwing from its lustrous surface all manner of wondrous lights and shadows, of changing hues that ranged from vivid violet into sombre gray. Straight across the stage the Jackies trotted and, without an instant's break in their rhythmic pace, an instant's pause of indecision, they dropped the monstrous square of canvas, outspread, before the royal box, and went their way to vanish in the left-hand distance, their rhythmic trot unbroken to the end. After that, the arrival of the royal court

and the dancing of the *pavane*, the peacock minuet, came by way of anti-climax.

"But, by Jove!" Wade said, as he pounded his applause at the closing of the stately dance; "I never saw such colour in my life. I'd like to go back again and be a reporter, for the mere sake of piling on the adjectives."

But there was scanty chance for conversation. The last courtiers were barely off the stage, when the Jackies trotted in once more to bear away the royal carpet; and, a moment later, the jangling bells, hidden away among the trees, announced Champlain's return to his baby colony.

All the colony went trooping down to the water's edge to greet him. Then, while the cannon boomed and the bells clashed merrily, they came trooping back again, with Champlain and his girl wife in their midst, the centre of plaudits and of cheering. Champlain, masterful and arrogant, by good rights should have been the focus of all eyes, since the whole celebration was given in his honour. Instead of that, however, all eyes were fixed on Janet Leslie, as she came slowly forward, clinging to her husband's arm, womanly in her dignity, childlike in her modest bearing, her dull mauve robe trailing softly across the trodden grass and catching into itself all the purplish glory of the falling twilight.

She went through her part so simply that it seemed less a part than life itself; she received the greeting of her loyal people, the eager admiration of the



dusky Indians who pressed about her, toying with her trinkets, gazing at themselves delightedly in her little mirror. Then, when the savage dance was ended and the citizens once more drew near to broach their cask of wine and drink her health and welcome, the enthusiasm no longer could be downed. Champlain received his share; but Janet's was the real ovation. After her sorrow and her change of fortune, after her three years in the great American college, Janet Leslie had come back to them once more, their own and a Canadian still, to be the real queen of all their festival.

But even the loyal young Quebeckers slackened the clamour of their glad welcome, and paused to smile at one another, as their gaze rested on the tall, gray-eyed stripling in violet trunks and tights who, heedless of his minuet partner standing at his side, leaned far over the rail of the right-hand stand, pounding his hands together until his palms were blistered.

From far across the mammoth stage, Janet heard the clamour, lifted her head and, careless of all who saw her, sent a smile of merry, mocking gratitude straight to its eager source.

## CHAPTER TEN

LATE that same evening Lady Wadhams came. She was a buxom blonde of forty plus, marvellously gowned and with a face as totally devoid of expression as if it had been enamelled. With her came an assortment of hand luggage which apparently included everything in the world but her maid and her trunk, both of which articles were far too impressive to be listed in that category. The category did include, however, a diminutive Japanese poodle who objected strenuously when the carter ventured to step down on the pavement to accept his fare. As he also objected strenuously to Janet, it might be reasoned that he shared the aristocratic prejudices of his mistress. Be that as it may, at least he was less inexpressive. In fact, his expressiveness became a shade too strident, and the maid, receiving him from the arms of her mistress, became expressive on her own account and slapped him soundly.

Only Janet and Mrs. Blanchard were waiting to greet her Ladyship in the hall, although a fringe of jaunty ties and pumps, dimly visible through the banisters of the upper hallway, betrayed the fact that American curiosity was rampant up above. Later, it stole away on the tips of its toes, and took

counsel together in the room of Mrs. Argyle whose whispered admonitions to it to be good and come away, had been quite lost in the din of the arrival. When the last piece of hand luggage had been deposited on the floor of the hall, and when the poodle ceased to monopolize the conversation, Lady Wadhams turned to Janet who stood waiting, dainty and girlish in her thin muslin frock, to lead the way upstairs.

"I would like to see Miss Leslie," Lady Wadhams said, and her voice was majestic.

"I am Miss Leslie," Janet replied quietly.

Lady Wadhams' lorgnette was of mother-of-pearl and fiercely shining. She turned it full on Janet. Then, —

"Impossible!" she observed briefly. Then, without another word, she followed her maid upstairs and vanished for the night inside the room which Mrs. Blanchard already was pointing out to the impassive nursemaid of the poodle.

Across the hall and behind closed doors, the conference lasted long. Now and then, Mrs. Argyle, as in duty bound, suppressed some utterance too audible or too outspoken. At heart, however, she agreed; and the younger generation, feeling her agreement, disregarded her suppressions utterly. Mrs. Argyle had heard the voice; above all, she had heard the accent, and she had drawn her own conclusions. The Argyle circle was singularly free from snobs.

At length, Jack rose to his feet, in token that, for him, at least, the discussion was nearing its end.

"After all," he said; "I'm sorriest for my mother and Janet. It will come hard on them. The rest of you are Americans, and don't care a hang. As for me, I've seen her kind before; they used to be the bane of my sleeping-car existence, for they filled all space, wanted all the privileges, and insisted on tipping me, and not the porter. I am a little sorry, though, to have you get the notion that this is our upper class. It's not the real thing at all; but then — But my mother does take a title desperately in earnest, no matter whether it's two years old, or two hundred. As far as Janet is concerned, it will use up all her spare time to wait upon the prejudices of that infernal puppy."

The puppy, as it proved, was by no means the central point of Janet's woes. The woes began early, next morning, began with the advent of Mary Browne at Janet's bedside.

"Miss Janet dear," Mary made regretful preface; "I'm sorry to be disturbing you; but whatever will I do? There's not a drop of water to be had and the fat lady upstairs is ringing her bell to bits, to have me bring her some."

Janet sat up in bed, and rubbed her eyes. It was a purely conventional thing to do, however, since the last touch of sleepiness had vanished at the sound of Mary Browne's anxious voice.

"No water!" she echoed in amazement.

"Not a drop from any of the taps, as the woman calls them that scrubs the floors. Faith, I'd like to see her tap them now. They're dry as a contribution box in a country church."

Janet gave her eyes another rub. Then she dropped back again upon her pillow and lay staring up at Mary Browne in perplexity.

"Have you telephoned yet?" she asked.

"To what shop would I telephone for water?" Mary Browne demanded. Then, seeing the real consternation written on Janet's upturned face, she repented of the flippancy of her question. "Where would I telephone?"

"To the water company. Ask them — Oh, find out anything you can. I'll be down in a few minutes." And, a bath being obviously out of the question, Janet seized her shoes and stockings.

Mary Browne was back again, before her young mistress had finished brushing out her long brown hair.

"It's the main has broke, Miss Janet dear, on account of their turning on too much pressure for all these extra people. There's no water anywhere; it will be noon, before it comes."

Dropping her hand, brush and all, to her side, Janet faced the maid limply.

"Mary Browne! What can we do?"

"Go without," Mary Browne responded.

"Yes; but Lady Wadhams, and breakfast, and

all?" Janet urged. "I could manage the girls and even Mrs. Argyle; but Lady Wadhams — What will she do?"

"The same thing everybody else is doing, this morning, and the same thing she herself would do, if she was at the Château. People will have to wash in a pint cup, to-day; that is, if they're lucky enough to wash at all. As for breakfast, go and have a talk with Mrs. Argyle. She's got the American sense and get-there in her, and she'll tell you what to do."

And Janet, forgetting her national nerves in the more urgent crisis, departed, brush and all, in search of Mrs. Argyle, amid the plaudits of Sidney and Day who, by this time, were well awake.

Mrs. Argyle frowned anxiously, as Janet disclosed the crisis.

"I don't like it, Janet," she said decidedly, when Janet had ended her disclosure. "It's too much like a preface to typhoid. You can't be too careful, child, no matter what it costs you. You have a large tank in the garret, where the water comes into the house? Save that for what you need most, and be sure you boil, boil a good half hour, every single drop you use for cooking, all this week. Boil it hard. For the table — We could get on without, for once; but I suppose —"

Janet laughed.

"I suppose she will," she assented.

For an instant, Mrs. Argyle's face became as merry.

as Janet's own. Then she returned to the case in hand.

"You'd better wake the boys at once," she said, still with the quick decision that, weeks after, proved to have been their best protection. "Tell them to dress as fast as they can, and go out to buy Apollinaris. They must get it, a good deal of it and at any sort of price. Ask Rob to come in here, before he goes." Then she smiled up into Janet's anxious face. "Don't worry, child," she said lightly. "That will carry us through the day; and it will be all right by to-morrow, by the latest. As for the poodle, he can live on milk, and I'll take her Ladyship on my own shoulders."

However, she did not.

Lady Wadhams appeared at breakfast, an hour later, clothed in a frown of disapproval which included all things. She also wore a white silk frock and a dog-collar of pearls. A part of her frown she diverted from things in general and turned upon the costume of Mrs. Argyle, whose dark blue linen tailor-made clothes had, as it chanced, cost far more money than the silk frock of Lady Wadhams. For reasons of her own, moreover, Mrs. Argyle's morning trinkets consisted of a small gold brooch and her wedding ring. Lady Wadhams dropped her lorgnette with a click, nodded curtly to Janet, curtly to Mrs. Blanchard, seated herself and fell to gazing into space, while she tapped the cloth with her finger-tips.

Mrs. Argyle repressed her own smile, shook her

head warningly at Day whose lips were twitching ominously, then turned to the haughty dame beside her.

"Is n't it a charming morning?" she asked casually, as she took up her napkin.

The gaze removed itself towards a yet more distant space, the plump chin lifted itself slightly, and a voice, icily remote, responded, —

"Really? I had n't noticed."

Amy Pope sneezed. Later, she made apology.

"I had to do something, or else have apoplexy," she explained; "and it is so trite to cough."

"Have you caught cold, Miss Pope?" Jack asked her.

At his voice, Lady Wadhams lifted her glass and took a prolonged stare in his direction.

"Your son, I fancy, from his accent, Mrs. Blanchard," she observed. Then she turned to Jack, with swift effusion. "Really, it's very good to hear an English voice again. I was n't expectin' it at all."

Before Jack could forestall her, his mother, manifestly proud and pleased, had uttered the introduction; and Lady Wadhams, after a second and more approving stare, lost no time in annexing him to the list of her own possessions. Jack writhed in secret, as he met the demure, but mirthful, glances of the girls; but he could not well refuse to answer her Ladyship's efforts at conversation, and bit by bit he found himself drawn into talk. Once or twice he suffered a pause to grow long, for the sake of



watching Lady Wadhams turn a palpably deaf ear to the American accent around her. Once Wade, seeing Jack's manifest discomfort at being singled out for attention, sought to come to his relief; but Wade was promptly snubbed and dismissed to his place amid the outer darkness. And the situation ended with the breakfast.

Just as she was leaving the table, Lady Wadhams addressed the group at large.

"Is it an American custom, I wonder," she observed languidly; "to serve Apollinaris for one's breakfast?" Then, without awaiting a reply, she departed in search of the more congenial society of her poodle and her maid.

Paul gazed after her through the half-shut lids of him who gazes on a rare old picture, seeking to gain the full value of its perspectives.

"Nice birdie!" he remarked benignly. "The last time I saw her, though, she was n't so keen about discussing American customs as she is now."

"Saw her before! When was that?" the two Amys demanded, in eager duet.

Deliberately Paul rose from the table, deliberately he crossed to his half-brother's chair.

"When she dined at our house, last Christmas holidays," he answered nonchalantly. Then he bent down above his brother, as if in consolation. "Cheer up, Wadeikins," he adjured him. "I'll write home to mother, and ask her to send on a certificate that you really are within the social pale, even if you

don't look it." And the breakfast ended in a clamour of mirth quite unlike the sombre hush of its beginning.

Between the especial exigencies of the housekeeping developed by the presence of Lady Wadhams and the absence of water, and the excitement of preparing for the first real performance of the pageants, all that morning long her Ladyship's eccentricities were quite forgotten. One and all, the young Americans were engaged in flinging themselves into the breach, the boys departing in search of mineral waters and bulletins, the girls following Janet and Mary Browne and even Elsie about the house with offers of help which merely would have added to the general confusion, had they not been so full of good will and common sense. Even Amy Browne, the least efficient of the group, was caught in the general mood of energy, and Mrs. Argyle discovered her, a vast tin pail in hand, just starting down the steps.

"Where now, Amy?" she asked carelessly.

Amy shook her pail in gay good nature.

"Down to the Ring. I'm going to bring some water up from the fountain."

Mrs. Argyle's carelessness left her swiftly.

"No; you're not, child," she contradicted, while she laid a detaining hand on Amy's shoulder. "No one knows what may be in that basin. We can't be running any risks. If need be, we'll all swim in mineral water baths and cook with ginger ale; but this city water must be left alone for the present." And Amy, secretly relieved at being freed from cer-

tain pangs of conscience which had goaded her to her errand, set down the pail in a corner of the hall, and went in search of her embroidery.

Not until high noon and time for luncheon did Lady Wadhams give sign of her existence. Not until the luncheon was half over did she give sign that she was conscious that any one but Jack sat with her at the table. Then, suddenly lifting her lorgnette, she swept the table with a slowly-revolving stare which finally came to rest on Mrs. Blanchard's cluny cap.

"I thought some one told me, Mrs. Blanchard," she said, without troubling herself to drop her eyes from the cap to the face below; "that Mrs. John Argyle of New York was to be here in this house."

Mrs. Blanchard's sense of fun was not exuberant; but even she could not repress a smile.

"This is Mrs. Argyle beside me," she said quietly.

The lorgnette turned in the direction of the trim little lady in the dark blue frock, aggressive in its plainness. Then it fell.

"Really not?" said Lady Wadhams.

Then it was that Day choked and left the table.

For a moment, Rob sat gazing after her, his red face expressive of acute discomfort. Then he excused himself, and went limping away in search of his suffering sister. Unfortunately, however, he forgot to close the door behind him, and the sounds which came drifting down the stairs were plainly mystifying to Lady Wadhams.

"Do you suppose we ever can endure it, Rob?" Day said, as at last she wiped her eyes.

"We must, for Janet's sake," he answered grimly.

"But without disgracing ourselves, I mean."

Rob laughed.

"If this sort of thing goes on, I am much more afraid of our disgracing Janet. Still, how can a fellow keep from chortling? I thought I had seen snobs before; but she's outside the uttermost limit. What do you suppose mother probably said next?"

Day drew a long breath of relief that the worst of her giggling fit was finished.

"I don't see that there was anything left for her to say, until she could show off her marriage certificate. Rob, if this goes on for another meal, I shall —"

Rob interrupted.

"You've no right to laugh, Day; you're the one who brought it on us all. If I remember rightly, it was you who made the bargain."

"Does it strike you," Day inquired; "that there's a certain humour in the way she is snubbing mother and Wade, and taking dear old Jack to her heart? I wonder what she'd say, if —"

However, she was soon destined to find out.

Dinner went a shade more smoothly. The meal was very late, since the entire household, from Lady Wadhams down to Elsie and only excepting Mary Browne and the poodle, had been out to the pageants in the afternoon. Accordingly, it was long past

eight o'clock when they gathered in the dining-room, a gorgeous group. The younger ones were in their pageant costumes, while Mrs. Argyle, yielding to the protestations of her daughter, had abandoned her tailor-made frock in favour of a thing of frills and furbelows. None the less, Lady Wadhams, although relaxing a shade of her austerity in contemplating remote distances, yet saw fit to give most of her attention and all of her talk to Jack.

There was reason for this, too, Day felt, as she proudly watched this chosen friend of hers, for Jack talked well, that night, and looked his very best. His full, dark wig had chanced to be the colour of his hair; it brought out all the best of his complexion, while its drooping lovelocks hid the scar which only strangers ever counted ugly. His dark red court costume fitted him well and, showing to their full his wide shoulders and erect and soldierly carriage, it added tenfold to his distinction and his dignity. Never really handsome, Jack Blanchard yet came near to it, that night; and, excited by the afternoon's success, he talked far more than was his wont with strangers, yet with the same frank simplicity which had first won the love of Rob Argyle.

Rob watched him, too, exchanging now and then a glance with Sidney, or a smile with Day, when Jack had scored a point of argument successfully, or when both voice and eyes took on the quiet kindliness they all loved best of all his moods. It was plain that Lady Wadhams felt his charm. She re-

called her gaze from distance and turned it full on Jack, without the slightest consciousness of the contrast between her inexpressive countenance and that of Jack, so strong and quiet in its manliness. At last, leaning her plump elbows on the table, she faced him even more directly.

"Were you in Ottawa, last winter, Mr. Blanchard?" she asked.

Jack shook his head.

"I was in New York."

"Really, I thought I might have met you there at Government House. In New York? Where were you before that?"

Jack smiled a little, as if to himself; but he made no pause, not even one long enough to add emphasis to the little intake of the breath, which ran around the table. He answered with unruffled quiet, albeit very distinctly, —

"Before that, Lady Wadhams, I was conductor of a Pullman sleeping-car."

All around the table, the breath went out again, audible now by reason of the pause which followed Jack's words. Lady Wadhams took her elbows from the table, and fixed her eyes upon limitless distance. The pause lengthened. Mrs. Argyle, for once, lacked the right word to say; and the young people, one and all, were too much interested in the little scene to wish to hurry it towards its end. The pause lengthened more and more, until it came to a point where Lady Wadhams alone could be the one to break it.

And break it she did. Some germ of inherent niceness in her, not yet entirely overgrown with snobbery, made her repent it that she had created something which seemed to her a wholly impossible situation. She recalled her gaze from distance and turned it again to Jack.

"How interestin'!" she said, with a heavy sort of enthusiasm. "Some day, you must be tellin' me all your adventures. I've always wanted to meet a really self-made man." And, rising from the table, she pressed her hand into Jack's arm with ostentatious friendliness.

Jack saw her to the door, closed the door behind her. He was but just in time, for Paul, by reason of his past acquaintance, was once more summing up the situation.

"How nice!" he said. "And her husband won his title from his millions, and he won his millions from the beef he packed out to the Boer war. It's a grand thing, Jack, to be a British nobleman."

"Perhaps Jack spells his in two words, Paul," his cousin reminded him, too low for Jack to hear.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

NEXT day, the Prince of Wales came; and, of all the household, it was Mary Browne who showed the most enthusiasm in sallying forth to meet him.

"I never saw a prince in all my life, and my grandfather was a British subject," she averred. "No, Miss Janet dear; I thank you kindly for the offer of your bedroom window; but I think I'll be going out to meet him when he lands."

And Janet applauded her decision. She even went to the length of ordering luncheon served a full hour early, so that Mary Browne might have leisure to don her festival array. Janet had always been a loyal friend to Mary Browne; but, in the past two days, her loyalty had taken on a new consideration. It was no small undertaking to keep one's temper under strict control, while catering to the whims of Lady Wadhams; but Lady Wadhams herself was as nothing, in comparison with the poodle. As the hours and the meals had gone by, it had transpired that the poodle was a fanatic epicure, and far more critical, even, than was his mistress. However, this might have been by reason of his longer pedigree and consequent longer period of dainty living. On the first morning of his Quebec sojourn,



Mary Browne had made the supreme mistake of offering him a breakfast of broken bits of meat and bread served on a new tin plate. The poodle sniffed, backed off to scowl at Mary Browne, then lifted up his voice in querulous lamentation. His mistress, pushing the tin plate aside with the tip of her plump foot, interpreted his remonstrances as an explanation that his customary breakfast was a bowl of chicken broth and a slice of fresh and crispy buttered toast. Mary Browne, with apparent meekness, had bowed to the inevitable. Yet, after all, she had been engaged to cook for humans, not for canines.

Luncheon served and eaten, Janet descended on the kitchen, sent Mary Browne to her room and, with the help of Elsie, proceeded to wash up the dishes. Mary Browne had remonstrated; but, in the end, she had yielded and gone creaking up the stairs. Half an hour later, she had come creaking down again, portly and prosperous-looking in her trim black gown and feathered hat; and her incessant smile had widened almost to her ears at the chorus of farewells which came from the front windows, as she turned down the sunny street. Ten minutes later, Paul came sauntering into the kitchen.

"'Most ready?" he queried.

Janet shook her head.

"Dozens more cups, the knives to clean, and all the puppy's dishes," she made answer.

"Confound the puppy! I hate a dog no bigger than a skeeter, with the manners of a royal duke.

Let the knives go, and feed the poodle out of a tin can," he advised her.

"No use. The creature must have his Minton, no matter what the rest of you get. Are the others ready to start?"

"Sidney has put the seventh pin into her best hat, and now she is fitting on some new gloves. Think what it is to be a prince!" Paul added pensively.

Janet disdained the addition.

"Tell them to go on," she ordered. "I really must finish here, and I'll find you, down below."

"Shame to leave you!"

"No help for it," she answered, with what philosophy she could. "It was Mary Browne's turn; she deserves an outing now and then. It's all right, really, and I will overtake you. Please do go on."

Paul nodded, and, his fists still in his pockets, departed in the direction of the hall where the others stood chattering and settling their hats and gloves, while they waited for Janet.

"Go ahead, all of you," was his version of the message with which he had been burdened. "I'll wait for Janet, and bring her along after you in a few minutes." That done, he returned to the kitchen and seated himself astride a corner of the table, there to await the leisurely progress of events.

"Now and then a fellow gets tired of being in a bunch. I thought I'd rather take it calmly, alone

with you," he offered explanation. "What's turned all the soldiers out into Louis Street?"

Janet, careless of her hands, attacked the knives, and fell to scouring them in energetic haste.

"They're lining the streets to the wharf, I suppose," she said, above the clatter. "They generally do."

"I should say they were lining them, with a vengeance. There's a string of red coats squatting on each curb from Citadel Hill down as far as you can see. The street looks like a tomato patch in a sunny garden. It must be ninety-nine out there, and there's a good two hours to wait. As I observed before, it must be a grand thing to be a prince," Paul added meditatively.

He said it once again, an hour later; but the meditative quality was all gone from his alert young voice, and his gray eyes were gleaming with the excitement of the scene. His present position was far less comfortable than had been his seat astride the corner of the table. Up on top of the highest roof in Lower Town, a roof covered with tin that matched the heat of the blazing July sun exactly above their heads, shadeless, breezeless, he and Janet were sitting side by side, awaiting the coming of the royal fleet. Strange to say, however, they were not uncomfortable; they were entirely too content for that. For the time being, their years had dropped from them, and they were a pair of merry, carefree youngsters, as they sat there on the scorching roof,

their backs against a chimney and their toes stuck out before them, stiff and straight.

"Seems rather like old times, Janet," Paul had commented, as he had flung himself down beside her with a careless bounce which set the tin to clattering beneath his weight.

There were no reservations in Janet's answering smile.

"Exactly," she made contented reply. Then, with a glance at the gay scene around them, she added, "Only, you know, with a difference."

But Paul protested.

"No difference at all," he told her. "There's us, and there's a jolly big powwow. It always used to happen so."

In truth, there was, to use Paul's phrase, a jolly big powwow going on around them. It is not every day that the royal heir comes to his colony's shores; and, to all appearing, now that he was coming, the whole colony had turned out to do him honour. Above their heads, the entire cliff edge was black with people, huddled in an ever-thickening swarm which stretched from the Grand Battery clear to the top of the green glacis below the King's Bastion, a long dark line against a background of gay and fluttering bunting. Around them, on other, lower roofs, were little knots of men and women, their gay summer costumes forming curious contrast with their unlovely quarters. Below, the street was lined with soldiery, shoulder to shoulder, ready to present arms at the

royal coming. Every now and then the cobbles clattered beneath the hoofs of a mounted regiment, or the high walls on either side echoed the gay notes of a band, leading other regiments down to take position near the landing; and to Janet, listening, it seemed that the bands played always *Canada*, and then *God Save the King*. Last of all, from Mountain Hill there came a clatter and a cheering. The next instant, into the street below there swept a train of scarlet coats, of prancing, kicking horses, of stalwart, strong-faced men. It was the Northwest Mounted Police, the Royal Police almost as famous in fiction as in fact; and they were riding down to guard the royal landing, for the hour of the arrival had now come.

“Look!” Janet’s hand trembled a little, as it pointed down the river beyond the grim gray fleet backed by a single white and yellow ship, beyond the bevy of small craft, down to the point where Saint Joseph landing juts out to meet the Isle of Orleans. “I see the smoke. They’ll be in sight now, in a minute.”

Then, heedless of the crowd about her, heedless of Paul at her side, she let her hand fall into her lap, and sat there silent, intent, her eyes gleaming, her lips slightly parted, while the faint banners of smoke grew nearer, more distinct until, inch by inch, there crept into sight around the point the dark hull of the escorting cruiser, and, close behind, the huge shape of the *Indomitable*, ship of mystery, bearing

at her masthead the yellow and blue and scarlet of the royal standard.

For moments long, ever since the first faint curl of smoke had been sighted above Point Saint Joseph, the vast crowd had held itself in silence, utter, breathless. Then when, the point quite rounded, the great *Indomitable* came sweeping towards them, river and cliff above echoed with one great cry of welcome, while the gray waiting fleet turned to a tangle of gay colours, and the royal salute of one and twenty guns came crashing down from the citadel on high to meet the answering crashes from the ships of war below.

Amy Pope, meanwhile, audibly and aloud was bemoaning the separation of Paul and Janet from their little party.

"I know they're not as comfortable as this, in all that crowd," she protested for the dozenth time, unconscious of the fact that Janet and Paul were by now ensconced upon the topmost point of the building where Mr. Leslie's office had been of yore, a building which far overtopped its neighbours. "I do hope they can see what's happening."

"Trust Janet!" Rob said lazily. "She has a good head for making her own arrangements. But, as for comfort —" He gazed about him with an expressive smile.

Down in the lower harbour, opposite the *Empress* at her long red pier, there lay the steam yacht of a western railway king. The king himself, meeting

and recognizing Rob and Mrs. Argyle as they had crossed the Ring, that noon, had carried back the whole party with him to his launch, and now they were stretched out in deck chairs underneath the flapping awning of the yacht, consuming iced tea and sandwiches, while they waited for the royal advent. The three Argyles and the Amys, quite used to such experiences, took the whole matter tranquilly, even to their host who, divested of his newspaper crown, proved to be a genial, jovial gentleman. Little by little, the talk grew personal between them, until Jack felt at liberty to shift his chair a bit nearer Sidney.

"Another chapter," he said to her smilingly, and too low for their host to hear.

Instantly her smile answered to his own. Where Jack Blanchard was concerned, Sidney rarely needed an interpreter, and now her mind flashed backward to the evening, years before, when Jack had likened to a fairy tale the strange transitions in his life. The great transition, though, had been between the two extremes. Jack's real life lay between them. His Pullman car experience had been no more his natural place than was the social circle of Lady Wadhams, or even of his present host. Jack's father had been a gentleman who, from no fault of his own, had died and left his widow penniless. Jack's university life had been interrupted by the Boer war and its consequent call for troops. The ending of the Boer war had found him with but three pos-

sessions to his name: a D. S. O., a plucky nature, and an old mother dependent on his care. The Pullman uniform had been the rest of the story; the rest, but not the end, for now had come the sequel. And the sequel, as Jack well knew, was testing him with its gay prosperity as no adversity had ever done. And Jack knew, too, within his secret heart, that he could never have met that test one half so well, had he not been able to count upon the loving loyalty of Day, the frank common sense of Sidney Stayre. He counted on them both; but with this difference: it was with Sidney that he talked most often of the changes in his life and prospects. Now his words responded to her smile of comprehension.

"This sort of thing is really very upsettin', as her Ladyship would say. I think I have a natural appetite for the fleshpots, Sidney."

"Have n't we all?" she asked him.

"More than most of you, I mean. It's so easy to slide along a cushioned groove; but I'm not so sure it's good for me."

"Meaning?" But her eyes were not at all in harmony with the brevity of her question.

His answer was as brief.

"That, once in a while, I feel as if I had been swept off my feet and landed in a satin-covered bed."

She laughed outright at his metaphor.

"But the bed is comfortable," she assured him gayly.



Thoughtfully he continued his metaphor.

"Yes. Still, a fellow can lose the use of his legs, if he stops in bed too long."

Something in the accent caught Sidney's half-idle attention. There was anxiety in it, and something akin to self-distrust. She turned to him directly, a world of liking and of cordial reassurance in her eyes.

"You won't," she told him flatly. "It's not in you. In fact, you'll prevent that by the way you're lying and kicking now. What's the matter, Jack? Out with it!"

For a moment, he sat facing her in silence, studying her intently as she waited there, upright in her lounging chair, her strong, bright face intent upon his mood, her brown hair ruffled by the breeze which softly stirred her pale rough pongee frock. Sidney was good to look at, he told himself, but better still to know. No mere outward beauty, however exquisite and dainty, could ever count for much, when weighed against those downright, honest eyes of hers that looked straight towards the heart of all things, himself included. The moment was long and full of thoughtfulness; but at length he answered, and his answer took her by surprise.

"Moral indigestion," he told her crisply.

She frowned, but not at him.

"Jack," she said; "it's that horrid woman. She's going on your nerves."

He shook his head.

"I'm not a baby, Sidney. Men are n't supposed to have such things as nerves. Still —"

"Still, she was very horrid," Sidney supplemented.

This time, Jack laughed, and his laugh was refreshingly normal, especially after his late mood of introspection.

"Really, Sidney, if the truth must be told, I rather liked the fun of the whole thing," he reassured her, and she could not doubt the sincerity of voice or words. "I've never been able to be ashamed of my Pullman epoch; really, there was nothing especially disgraceful about it, except one half-white porter who stole my best shoes. But I did enjoy firing it at Lady Wadhams, for I knew the shock would bowl her over utterly. What's more, it did." He paused to laugh boyishly at the memory. "Still, I must say," he added; "the old lady picked herself up sooner than I should have given her credit for being able to do."

For a little time, Sidney shared his mirth. Then, leaning back in her chair, she fell to studying him intently.

"Then what is it really, Jack?" she asked him.

From the distant reaches of the river whence so soon the ship of mystery was to appear, he recalled his gaze and fixed it on her face.

"I suspect it's too long a vacation, Sidney," he answered then. "I'm used to working. I'm happiest when I'm busy; that is, I get the soundest sort of happiness. It's good fun, this drifting on

from day to day, doing nothing but live in a perpetual sort of party; but it is n't good for me. I was n't born to it, as the Argyles are; I need the other thing to keep me steady. It's like taking a fellow off a meat diet and feeding him on nothing but ice cream. The ice cream is sweet and cool and good; but it does n't make much muscle. Some day or other, I shall need my muscle. Some day, even, I may get put back into the old groove, and find I'm not large enough to fill it. If one softens, one has a tendency to shrink; it would be beastly not to fill up one's last-year shoes. Besides, whatever comes, I'm not likely to go on for ever, a tail to the Argyle kite."

Once more Sidney sat up to face him. This mood of Jack's was new to her; it antagonized her slightly, worried her much more.

"Jack," she questioned sharply; "have you been misunderstanding Rob, or Day?"

His answer reassured her.

"No, Sidney. One never misunderstands one's very dearest friends."

"Then what is the matter?" she queried fearlessly.

"What I say. They make my life too easy for me. It's bound not to last."

"Do you doubt their loyalty?" she asked a little shortly. Then, seeing his colour come, she straightway repented of her shortness. "Jack," she said; "you're right. You have been lazy too long. You're thinking about yourself and growing mor-

bid; you need to wake up and get busy. About the Argyles: they do make life easy for you, for me, for us all. They do it as a matter of course. They can, and they don't think anything about it. But you don't see the other side of it, the things you do for them."

"What things?" he interrupted.

She smiled a little, as she lifted her eyes to his.

"The way you keep all sorts of little worries away from Mr. Argyle; the way you spare him work and care and friction with the men who try to waste his time. And Rob. He's very lame; there's no use trying to deny it, nor," her voice dropped to a murmur; "nor that he always will be. In a way, it holds him out of man things; but he always has you in reach to keep him happy and in touch with mannish ways. That alone should count for everything. From what Rob has said to me, I know he feels he owes you what he never, never can make even. And with Day — Jack, do you know what it means to us girls to have a friend like you, older, almost like a brother, but something else besides? I found it out, when I had Wade."

"Only from Wade, Sidney?"

Her eyes met his; but her reply was lost in the sudden clamour which rose around them, as the yacht's colours went whizzing to the masthead. The *Indomitable* was in sight, a ship of mystery no longer.

And, all this time, Mary Browne was having adventures on her own account, and, what is more, enjoying them immensely.

From the hour of her entering Quebec, she had confessed to Elsie that she had felt herself on foreign soil, a tourist in a stranger country where the daily routine was a mere show enacted for her benefit. To-day, routine had ceased entirely, to be replaced by a gorgeous bedlam of colour and noise and swirling human crowds. And Mary Browne, of set purpose and smiling broadly, made her way into the thickest of the bedlam, revelling in the feeling that she was a part of the packed, ecstatic life around her. Had not a stern sense of decorum prohibited, she would have waved a union jack, or beaten on a drum. That forbidden, she elbowed her way as close as possible to the man who did it.

The Prince was late about arriving, a good two hours behind his printed schedule. Mary Browne passed the time industriously threading the city streets to see the final decorations, standing on divers corners to watch divers passing soldiers, and nearly giving herself an apoplexy by running after a score or more of pipers that served as band for one of the visiting Highland regiments. At last, warned by the clattering hoofs of the Mounted Police that the royal advent was at hand, she rushed down Mountain Hill behind them at a breakneck pace which roused the plaudits of the watching crowd, turned a corner or two, and came out upon the

water front just in season to see the royal launch approach the shore.

People, standing near her, wondered who could be the buxom, smiling personage who beat her palms together in such lusty welcome; but Mary Browne, heedless of their glances, watched the show to its formal finish. Then, the show ended and the Prince upon colonial soil, her mind rushed swiftly forward to her waiting pots and kettles, and she glanced down at her dangling, moon-faced watch.

"Saints be good to us! It's past four o'clock, and the soup not started!" she ejaculated, more than half aloud. "I'll take a look at him, as he's passing, and then I must just leg it home as fast as ever I can trot."

Accordingly, she edged and elbowed her way landward to the forefront of the crowd, which she reached just in time to take to herself and answer one of the random salutations of the Prince.

"For all the world like that nice little clerk at Holden's ribbon counter, and not a bit more stiff!" was her verdict. "Well, I've seen him and he's seen me, so now for home."

Suiting the action to the word with all her customary promptness, she turned to follow along beside the royal procession, her eyes and mind too intent upon the gorgeous spectacle to pay much heed to the tricky nature of the sidewalks, or their ability to support her weight. She took a dozen steps in safety, thirteen, fourteen; then there came a crash

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of decayed boarding. An instant later, Mary Browne felt a second crash, not of the boarding now, but of something inside her ankle; and, faint with pain, she went pitching forward and sidewise, straight upon the brief red coat-tails of one of the Northwest Police who had that instant halted by her side.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

“**I**T’S only his nonsense, Miss Janet dear, to get himself a patient,” Mary Browne averred, next morning. “For why should I stay in bed, when I’m as well able as ever to sit with my foot in the chair, giving orders? Get me a girl that understands English and has a pair of feet. and I’ll do the rest of it with my head.”

Girls, however, understanding English or otherwise, were not to be found so easily as all that. Janet had wellnigh worn out the telephone wire and completely worn out her patience, by the time she made the discovery that a helper for Mary Browne must come from inside the household, not from out. It was Mrs. Argyle who first put the discovery into so many words, Mrs. Argyle, too, who called a council of war, and divided up the entire population of the house, Mrs. Blanchard and the retinue of Lady Wadhams alone excepted, into a series of watches which were detailed to do the bidding of Mary Browne whose orders were interspersed with lamentations over her incapacity.

“It’s me that was a wool-gathering, staring idiot, and brought it on myself entirely,” she said drastically. “If I was you, Miss Janet dear, I’d pack me off to the hospital. To think of a lady with a

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pair of hands like Mrs. Argyle mixing up the cakes for tea!"

Janet had betaken herself to the kitchen bright and early, that morning, her heart in her boots and her mind set upon planning breakfast. To her extreme surprise, she had found Mary Browne ensconced in a chair beside the stove, her lame foot upon another chair, and industriously beating muffins.

"Mary Browne! What are you doing here?" she exclaimed.

Mary Browne's smile was wide enough to cover the traces of a sleepless night.

"I thought you'd like some corn muffins, Miss Janet. The poodle eats 'em, too."

"But the doctor said —"

Mary Browne's answer has already been recorded.

"How did you get here, anyway?" Janet demanded, when her objections had been set forth at length.

Mary Browne's reply was terse.

"Hitched," she answered.

"Bravissimo!" Rob's voice sounded from the doorway. "I'll try it, myself, next time I'm laid up."

"Rob!" Janet spun about to face him. "What are you doing down here at this unholy hour?"

Rob, smiling and his hands in his pockets, came sauntering across the floor.

"I came to cook the breakfast, leastwise the best

part of it. I have n't that confidence in your powers, Janet, that leads me to leave it all to you. Besides, it's not the first time we've put it through together. How goes it, Mary? Rather bad?"

"It might be worse," she told him stoutly.

He nodded, as if in admiration of her courage.

"Yes," he said briefly; "heaps. You can be mended, and that's more than all of us can say." Then his accent changed. "Seems to me you've slugged those muffins about long enough. Give them to me, and I'll put them in the pan." And, with much hilarity and an occasional mischance, the breakfast preparations went their way.

Janet left the breakfast things to Elsie, and departed to the telephone. Mrs. Argyle, reading her morning letters in the next room, could not well keep herself from overhearing the one-sided talk, nor yet the little sigh with which Janet hung up the receiver. Contrary to the habit of most women in her social set, Mrs. Argyle had taken pains to teach herself to do all that concerned a house, and now she resolved to put her lessons into use. The council of war that followed, was brief, and Mrs. Argyle's final words summed up its decisions.

"Then, as I say, we all will take a hand, till Mary is about again. Day, you and Amy Browne are n't worth a fig in the kitchen, so you'd best divide Elsie's work upstairs, and leave her for the dining-room and for the cook's assistant. Amy Pope can do the rest of the housemaid work; and Sidney

and Irene and Janet and I can get on in the kitchen."

"What about me?" Rob queried meekly.

"You are like Day, too ornamental to be of much use," Amy Browne assured him bluntly, while her approving eyes, sweeping him from head to heel, belied her tone.

"Much I am! Ask Janet," he bade her.

"I can't get on without you," Janet responded. "Come along and peel some 'taties; that is, if you've not forgotten how, in the last five years."

"Well, I like —" Paul was beginning; but Janet cut him off.

"So do I. Rob and I have cooked before."

"Likewise squabbled," Rob reminded her.

She made a little grimace of disgust.

"Don't talk about that horrid day. It was a storm, in every sense of the word; but we have learned to behave better now. What a termagant I was!"

"As you say, those days are over," Rob assured her cheerfully. "What were you asking, Jack?"

"Where my usefulness comes in."

"Keeping Lady Wadhams in good temper," Day replied unhesitatingly.

He laughed. Then he shook his head, and dropped his voice a little.

"No use. My star has set," he told her, while the talk sprang up around them; "or, rather, it has turned into a bright brass button."

“Jack!” She gave him one keen, searching glance. “What utter nonsense!”

By the next morning, Mrs. Argyle had assumed full command.

“I shall go on duty, this morning,” she announced. “If I chaperon you children, to-night, that is really all I care to go out; and, after so much pageantry, Mary Browne and a mixing-bowl will be a real relief. Run along then, all you children, and put your rooms in order, for you are due at the Plains in just an hour.” And, despite the chorus of remonstrance, she had her way.

Quite as a matter of course, the influence of Gladys Horth had procured for all of Janet’s friends cards for the event of any hour which happened to be transpiring. The event of that night was one of the grandest of the state functions, and the city was all agog over the destinations of the huge square cards of invitation. Day alone had shown herself indifferent. There was to be dancing, and Day, dancing, was as light and tireless as a bit of thistledown; yet now and then she claimed that dancing bored her, and demanded to be left at home. Rob, shrewd observer of his sister’s moods, had long since learned that such demands never arose when he was out of reach, or otherwise occupied. However, being healthy and moderately unselfish, he could not see any real reason why, merely because his own dancing days had ended early in his lifetime, Day’s should be intermittent. Accordingly, he had taken

her in hand, argued with her, called Jack to help him in his argument, and then, himself, had telephoned to Gladys Horth that Day, thank you, would be very glad to get a card, after all. And the card came.

None the less, when it approached the time to begin dressing, Day balked again. Her face was very grave and penitent, as she sought out Jack in the library where he sat buried in the evening paper.

"Jack," she asked him, as she halted beside his chair; "shall you be very cross at me, if I don't go, to-night, after all?"

There was no hint of crossness in his smile, as he looked up at her. Nevertheless, he made his protest, as in duty bound by his promise to Rob.

"I really think he does n't mind our leaving him, Day."

"Not mind it, really. Still, it is very stupid for him to be left alone. Besides, I'd rather —" She hesitated, midway between her expressed loyalty to Rob, and the fear of wounding this other friend who stood so nearly in a brother's place.

Again he looked her through and through, with searching, kindly eyes.

"Day, you're very tired," he told her then.

She nodded, while the blood rushed to her cheeks, as if at her confession.

"Yes," she admitted; "I am. We've lived in a perpetual tornado of events, all this past week, and

to-day has seemed the finishing touch. I want to get out of sight and sound of it all, for a while; not dance half the night in a hot, crowded room."

Again his steady gaze met hers. Then, rising, he put her gently into a deep chair beside the open window.

"You're quite tired out," he said, a second time. "I'm going to turn out the lights, and you must stop here and rest till time to go to bed."

Laughing up at him, she shut her hand upon his arm, as if to stay him from carrying out his determination.

"You dear old tyrant, I haven't the least idea of stopping here," she told him gayly. "It's entirely too warm and too noisy. Jack, do you ever think how quiet it is at Heatherleigh? But, if you truly, truly do not mind a bit, I'm going to hunt up Rob and tell him he must carry me off somewhere, where it is quiet."

"What should I mind, Day?"

"The having me back out and leave you to go alone." She laughed a little. "Yes, I know that sounds conceited, when all the rest are going; but you know you had promised to look out for me."

"Exactly what I intend to do. Meanwhile, where's Rob?"

"In your room, I think. Do you mind telling him to come down here a minute? It's time you went up to array yourself."

"Thank you, I consider myself arrayed. What

do you say to going out on the river for an hour or two?"

She sat up and faced him.

"Jack, you mustn't give it up. If you do, I shall feel sure I've spoiled your evening. Amy Browne dances like a seraph, and has a brand-new gown that she's longing to flaunt before your eyes. Go and make her have a good time, that's a dear old boy. Besides, you can tell us all about it, in the morning."

His laugh filled the room.

"No use, Day. There'll be such a chorus at breakfast that I couldn't make myself heard above the rest. Moreover, on my honour, I hate the whole thing, and only promised to go, when Rob made such a point of my looking out for you. Up here, I am always in mortal terror of asking some of my former passengers to dance with me, and getting properly snubbed for my pains."

"I'd like to see them try it," Day made pugnacious answer.

"Very likely you may see it yet," he told her composedly. "Meanwhile —"

"Meanwhile, you'll go with Amy Browne," she besought him.

"Meanwhile, I go with you. Unless," he added gravely, seeing the objection in her eyes; "you'd rather go alone with Rob."

For a long moment, Day's eyes rested on the alert, soldierly figure halting at her side, on the

intent and questioning face. Then her smile widened, became full of mockery.

"Jack, it's horrid manners to fish for compliments," she reminded him flatly.

It was Rob who somehow or other gained the promise of a launch to take them up the river. In some fashion all his own, Rob always could accomplish things like that. Given a telephone and a little leisure, he could have had the moon for the asking, for he was past master of the art of wheedling. None the less, it was Jack, not Rob, who saved Day from the storm of remonstrances that arose around her, when her determination became known.

"Day's tired out, with all this fuss and feathers. She wants to go off somewhere with Rob, and rest. I really would n't urge her, for I think her mind is quite made up." That was all he said, and there was no sternness in his tone. Nevertheless, the clamour ceased. Uniformly quiet and controlled, Jack Blanchard's manner matched his eyes. Both of them could be a bit commanding now and then, yet their commanding rarely aroused antagonism.

After the ceaseless noise and glare of Louis Street, noise which lasted quite around the clock, glare which only changed from electricity to sun and back again, the still, dark river was a welcome relief to all their nerves. Behind them and before, the heights of Levis and Quebec blazed with long streamers of electric lamps, arching the streets, outlining Laval, the Château and the City Hall. Frontenac's statue



wore a dazzling crown, and the Parliament Buildings were festooned from tower to lowest coping. Beside them, the war ships were garlanded with lights, and the reflections struck the water sharply, coating with a coppery lustre the mysterious black depths that lay beneath. From the terrace above their heads, the music of a band came softly down to them, to be lost in the answering crash of the band on board one of the French frigates close at hand; and from somewhere, far across the city, a stream of little rockets went shooting upward, to curve over and go trailing lazily down across the ink-black sky.

Rob stretched himself out luxuriously in the stern, his head in Day's lap, his heels upon the rail.

"By Jove, Day, what a genius you were to think up this thing!" he said contentedly, as the launch, leaving the fleet behind, went sliding up the dark, still river. "I had no idea how sick I was of all that bedlam, till I got away from it."

Day fell to patting and stroking his yellow hair, as was her wont in times like this.

"It's all fun, Rob, every bit of it," she assented; "only, with the heat and the crowd and Lady Wadhams, there's rather too much of it. Besides, if we're to do the gala pageant, to-morrow, the little change won't hurt us."

Rob stretched himself a little straighter.

"Not me, sure. I was expecting to mind my book alone at home, and this is whole lots better."

Jack sighed heavily.

"I was expecting," he remarked, with a strong accent on the pronoun; "to plant my boot heels through Mrs. Royal Somebody's frilly train. Day, I too am grateful."

"Not really?" she challenged him, while she pointed upward to the fiercest glare of all, which marked the sky above the Parliament tower. "Think of the music there, and the pretty girls, and think of Amy's new pink frock, all covered and smothered in little real lace ruffles."

"She's welcome to smother it in real hens' feathers, for all I care," he answered callously. "I'd much rather be here with you."

"Not honestly?"

"Honestly, Day."

Abandoning Rob's hair, she planted her elbows on her knees beside his head, clasped her hands and surveyed Jack from over them, with dancing eyes.

"Jack," she admonished him; "this really is deplorable. I must take your social education in hand."

"Do," Rob urged her. "It may lead you to take your elbow off my left ear."

Day laughed, moved her elbow for the fraction of an inch, and then turned again to Jack.

"Jack, I really must have neglected your training," she persisted.

He shook his head. Then he clasped his hands

at the back of his neck, and settled down deeper in his chair.

"Forgive my sprawling, as long as it's Rob who sets the fashion," he said. "As for the training, Day, I'm overtrained. That's what's the trouble."

Day eyed him, for a moment. Then, —

"I'm afraid I don't pick up all the crumbs of your meaning, Jack," she told him.

"Merely this," he answered and, beneath the indolent lightness of his tone there came a little note of gravity; "that I began it all too late and had too much of it all at once. I've had about all that I need."

"Bored, Jack?" she rebuked him.

"Not bored, exactly. I only know too well just what it amounts to, and I'm not sure that, for me, it's quite worth while. At first, I enjoyed it; that is, after I learned the ropes. People were good to me on your account; your friends, Amy Browne especially, always saw to it that I had a good time."

"Then what was the matter?" Day questioned, as once more she attacked the task of beautifying Rob whose arm, flung upward, rested around hers in a cosy sort of knot.

Jack laughed a little.

"I preferred the substance to the shadow," he replied. "I liked you better than I did your influence trickling around among your friends and soaking back on me."

"Pretty metaphor, that!" Rob made idle comment.

"True, though," Jack retorted. "If it had n't been for you, I'd have been nowhere. Yes, I mean it, Day. Not in a business way, of course, but socially. It was so in New York. It is even more so, up here. People are decent to me, not as Jack Blanchard, but as the Argyles' chum. Under these conditions, I naturally prefer the Argyles to the other people, as long as I really am lucky enough to be the Argyles' chum."

"You bet!" Rob assented fervently. "Your sentiment does you credit, Jack; but don't you think it's rather warm to be so much in earnest? Next thing you know, your collar'll yield to your emotions, and then where'll you be?"

"Hush, Rob!" Day bade him. Then she pursued her argument. "You can't live on Argyles, Jack."

"Can, too."

"Even shredded-wheat doormats, taken as a steady diet, will give you an indigestion in time," Rob cut in. "I know, for they tried it at our eating club, last year."

Day laid her hand across his lips to silence him. Rob nibbled at her fingers; but Day was too much in earnest now to heed even her brother.

"Jack," she said, as simply as a little child; "you are our chum. Rob and I are the whole world to each other, and yet we are not quite as well contented, unless you are here with us. That does n't mean, though, that we expect you to feel that way about us. You need other friends, lots of them;

else, you'd get narrow. Even Rob and I are n't enough for each other. We each of us have our outside friends, too."

"Yes, I know," Jack nodded slowly. "But, with you, it's different. You were born where you are. I was n't."

"No; but you're adopted. What's more, you've proved your right to the place. Ask Amy Browne."

Jack unclasped his hands, clasped them again in front of him and fell to studying his long, brown fingers.

"Confound it, Day!" he blurted out at length. "There is a difference. You must see it, even if you won't own it. With you and Rob, I'm perfectly happy, for I know my ground. With all these other people, no matter how decent to me they are, I feel I'm walking on eggs that may go smash at any moment."

"All?" Day asked him soberly.

"All, that is, but Sidney. I've talked it over with her now and then, and she understands."

Day was a girl who had a heart and also her own reservations; yet now there was no trace of reservation in her smile, as she made cordial answer —

"Sidney always understands."

The night was far spent, and Mrs. Blanchard's patience was even farther spent, when Mrs. Argyle brought her charges home, their frocks demolished, but their eyes like stars. Last of all came Lady Wadhams, who lumbered up the stairs, her gorgeous

frock trailing after her and her head bejewelled like a Fiji queen. Outside of Mrs. Blanchard's open door, she halted to get her breath and unbutton her long gloves. Her breath once found, she spoke.

"Mrs. Blanchard, that 's an amazin'ly good young man, is your son. Really, I rather envy you." Then unconsciously she heaved a little sigh. "I had a baby boy once, myself," she added slowly and as if in spite of herself. "He only lived, three days." Then, turning, she went lumbering away after the retreating figure of her maid.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

**L**ONG before the hour set for the beginning of the pageants, next day, every approach to the historic Plains of Abraham was blocked by a solid mass of humanity, lined up in the streets, on the curbs, on fences, on the verandas of the houses along the route. The windows of the houses were full, too, for the dwellers along the Grande Allée, by this time become familiar with the appearance of the Prince, shifted their interest to the motley throng gathered to see his passing, for this was the gala day at the pageants, and at five o'clock he was to enter the royal box on the grandstand, and watch the history of Quebec played out before him.

The crowd, eager, attentive, for the most part waited with an orderly patience which yet was far removed from apathy. Now and then they pushed and jostled; now and then they burst into a little scattered cheering. They were strangers mostly, country people who had come into the city for the day, laden with babies and with luncheons, to catch at least a passing glimpse of the man who would one day be their king. Their patient waiting was less onerous than it seemed. They had come to see the Prince; it was for his passing that they had taken their stand, and the time to stand was very,

very long. Nevertheless, there was much to interest them while they waited, much to see in this unfamiliar Quebec whose sombre gray they had found all ablaze with bunting. To many of them, too, the sight was one for lawful pride of birth, as they beheld their own lost flag, the tricolour, side by side with the union jack and flanked with the less familiar stars and stripes, silent witness of the two guests most honoured at the ancient city's birthday party.

Meanwhile, the actors themselves were getting nervous over the prospect of their royal audience; and, as scarcely a home throughout the city lacked an actor, the city, outwardly calm, within its homes was in a violent ferment. Especially was this true of the Leslie house in Louis Street, where eight actors were robing themselves in half as many rooms, from across whose thresholds questions and lamentations and appeals for help issued in an unbroken fugue.

"Oh, de-ar! Where did I put my girdle?" This was from Amy Browne.

Day, from across the hall, responded.

"It's here, on Janet's bed. Do come and hook me up, that's a darling."

"In a minute. This horrid crinoline —" Amy left the finish of her phrase to the imagination of her hearers.

"What's the matter, Amy? Stuck in your door, and can't get through?" Rob's voice rang out cheerily



from behind his own closed door. "You'll have to take a reef in your sails, to-day. There is n't room for your skirt in any such crowd as this."

His last words were wellnigh drowned in a roar of woe from Paul.

"Oh, one of you fellows! Hurry up here! I've caught a hook-thing in the back of my lace necktie, and it's busting to all sorts of smithereens. Do hurry up, before it's wrecked entirely. There-e-e! Blanchard! Argyle! Somebody! Do come!"

"Can't. Sidney's curling up my wig; she'll brand me, if I stir," Jack called back placidly from his seat on the stair-head.

"What are you curling up your wig for, Jack?" And once again Rob gave evidence of the soundness of his lungs.

"Because I put it in a chair beside the window, last night, and then threw my coat on top of it. It was all warped cornerwise, this morning, like a chicken with shaking palsy. I'm just beautiful now, though." And Jack ducked his curly dark head at Sidney in token of grateful appreciation.

Standing off a little, the curling tongs still in her hand, she surveyed him from top to toe.

"You really do look rather well," she told him then.

"Don't make me too conceited," he bade her, laughing.

But she took the conceit out of him promptly.

"It's only this court finery of yours, chiefly your

wig. It is n't such a distressing mismatch as poor Paul's bright orange one. This goes with your eyes, and your new curls are — princely."

"The last time I saw His Royal Highness, his curls had been cut off, and the stubs were nearer the hue of Paul's," Jack told her gravely. "Still, it's a comfort to be told you look princely, even if you do happen to be a cat of another colour."

"I wish you would keep still, while I enumerate your charms," she remonstrated.

Without stirring, he smiled up into her eyes.

"I'd rather go about your own," he objected.

"Mine? But really, Jack, you must have been quite good-looking, before you undertook to keep my small sister from being burned to death. And yet," above her fantastic yellow gown, her face was very earnest; "do you know, I rather miss the scar, now it is out of sight?"

Jack's hand went to the side of his face, and his colour came.

"A good miss," he told her.

She shook her head.

"Day and I call it your badge of honour," she answered quietly. "To us, it stands for the — the very Jackishness that makes you what you are." Then, drawing back before something in his level eyes, she cast aside her gravity. "No use, Jack. Your red velvet clothes and your curly wig are wholly adorable; but you must make the very most of them while they last. Next week, you'll have to come

down again to plain blue serge and a cropped head. Meanwhile — ”

“ Meanwhile ? ” he queried, smiling once more into her gray eyes.

“ Oh, do go to thunder with your mooning, Tids ! ” Paul adjured her in a stentorian sort of bellow. “ I ’m all tangled up in my cape, and one of those fuzzybugs has ripped off my shoe. Come and sew me up, quick ! ”

“ Coming, Paul. Pull out your ruffles a little bit more, Jack, and be sure your feather does n’t wobble. There ! That is really perfect. Yes, Paul. Do wait till I can get my cap on.”

“ Wait ! With this infernal cape all in a mess, hind side before and under my chin like a baby’s bib ! If you can’t come, do send a substitute.”

“ Day ! Day ! Day ! Au-ro-ra-a-a-a ! ” It was Rob’s voice that cleft the air. “ I ’ve gone and pulled the puckering string all out of my left trouserlet. I can’t wear it, all slopping about like this. What shall I do ? ”

“ Irene,” Wade queried, in the hall below, where they were waiting for the actors to array themselves ; “ has it ever occurred to you to be thankful that I have no dramatic aspirations ? ”

“ Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! Oh, dear ! Oh — de-ar ! ” Amy Pope was heard in comprehensive lamentation, before Irene could answer.

Nodding expressively at Wade, she called up the stairway, —

“What is it, Amy?”

And the melancholy of Amy's answering tone was proportioned to the greatness of the tragedy, —

“I've caught my crinoline on the corner of my trunk and broken it to bits. Whatever shall I do? It's almost four now, and I look exactly like a punctured tire.”

And Irene, leaving Wade to enjoy his own smug reflections, rushed up the stairs, two at a time, to offer help and consolation, for were not Amy and Paul promoted to the main group of the *pavane*, exactly in the middle foreground before the royal box?

With Sidney and Irene to work, and the other girls to stand about and advise, the mischief was speedily repaired, and it was only a little after four, when the group went down the steps. Rob stared rather ruefully along the car-less street.

“There are certain minor inconveniences about having a prince on board,” he remarked.

“Rob!” Janet's remonstrance betrayed the fact that she was shocked at his flippancy.

Heedful of her nerves which by now were showing a little tightness, as result of the past two days of domestic struggle, he amended his phrase.

“For a poor football cripple, I mean. The rest of you can show your loyalty by walking humbly in the dust of the road. Myself, I find it mighty disconcerting, this trick they have of stopping all the cars, every time His Eminence goes somewhere.”

"What do they do it for?" Amy Pope queried, with a grimace of disgust at the empty tracks. "There's nothing particularly anarchistic about a street car."

"They are n't respectful, ma'am. It's a belt line, too, you see, and so he's bound to tie the whole plant up, every time he walks abroad. You were observing, Paul?"

"That, if you fellows had any sense at all, you'd telephone to have your mounts, and Day's, sent here for you. The rest of us can walk. It will get our muscles into training; besides, it's good fun to see the Amys bowl over everything in sight, as they go past." And Paul turned his back upon the afore-said Amys, while, with much flirting of his cape and swinging of his white-plumed hat, he sent a killing bow and smile across the street to Gladys Horth.

She interpreted the smile as invitation, and promptly joined their group.

"May I go out with you," she asked, as she gave her hand to Paul and then to Jack. "I've been waiting for a car for ever so long; I suppose we all will have to walk. How I envy you proud horse-men!" And she smiled straight up into Jack's eyes; as she stood beside him in the sun, a dainty vision of pale blue and silver filigrees.

For the life of him, he could not keep from smiling back at her, so open was her admiration for his changed appearance. Nevertheless, remembering

their first meeting, he felt with her now, as before, that could he see below the surface of her nature, he might find it flawed with a curious little streak of something, disloyalty, or snobbery, which to his honest eyes would make her seem a thing quite apart from girls like Sidney or like Day, girls he could trust from start to finish of their lives. Later on, much later, he reproached himself for this mistrust. In the meantime, he smiled at her; but his smile was fully as superficial as was her obvious coquetry with him. A moment later, her glance had moved on to Janet.

"You do look tired, dear," she said, and now her voice rang true and free from coquetry. "We're all so sorry for the bad time you are having. Still, we could n't spare you now, and I'm so glad you have decided to go on with it. Yours is the best part of it all, of all the women. It would have been a shame to miss doing it for the Prince."

For, only that morning, Janet had shut her teeth askew and sought the telephone. So intent was she upon the errand for which she had been bracing herself throughout a sleepless night, that she was totally unconscious of Lady Wadhams' cumbersome step upon the stairs.

"Is that Mrs. Horth? Is Gladys in? I'm Janet. May I speak to Gladys? Oh, Gladys, I am so sorry; but—I'm afraid I shall have to go out of the pageant. Things are getting worse here, all the time. Mary Browne really is in bed, to-day; and the poodle

has indigestion; and there's nobody to cook — What did you say? No; the poodle did n't do the cooking; but — Really, I can't, Gladys. Will you tell — ”

She was stopped by a hand upon her shoulder, a fat hand and beringed, but kindly. Then another fat hand shut on the receiver.

“ Let me speak a minute,” the owner of the hands said swiftly. “ Miss Gladys, this is Lady Wadhams that's speakin'. Miss Leslie will go on with her part. She can't be spared. I was tellin' the Prince about her, only last night. We don't need any cookin'; we can eat cold things for a day or two. The poodle? He is better, thank you very much. He ran away into the kitchen and stole the onion-stuff they'd been fryin' for the soup; but I think he'll pull through, all right. And you understand the message: Miss Leslie's keepin' on with the part as Madame Champlain? ” Then, having played out her own part as providence quite to her satisfaction, Lady Wadhams went her tranquil way.

On the stairs she met the poodle, convalescent and sauntering forth in search of exercise and entertainment. Boredom was in his eyes and in the droop of his apology for a tail. Lady Wadhams bent down to greet him, her pudgy hand extended.

“ Takie ittie hindie poottie,” she said, as cooingly as her waist measure and her natural impassiveness would allow.

And the poodle obediently turned himself about

until he faced her cornerwise. Then he lifted one small hind paw and laid it courteously within her Ladyship's outstretched and pudgy hand. A moment later, the greetings ended, her Ladyship passed onward up the stairs.

From her bed in the room above, Mary Browne had been an interested listener to the little scene.

"Holy mother of all the afflicted orphans!" she made comment to Amy Pope who stood beside her, smothering her amusement as best she might. "To be talking such palaver as that to a fuzzy poodle without a soul to his name! If she feels like that about it, she'd best be adopting a child and done with it, not wasting all her baby-talk on a senseless mop of a heathen dog."

Amy Pope, like Lady Wadhams, departed on her way. Going, however, she carried in her brain the germ of a new idea, and the idea, in time, was destined to spring up and bear much fruit.

But so it came about that Janet Leslie, notwithstanding her misgivings on the domestic score, had arrayed herself with the utmost degree of care and sallied forth to join the rising tide of a procession moving out to meet the Prince.

Punctually at five he came, a quiet, yellow-headed little gentleman, seemingly far too simple in his tastes to care about the official clamour which accompanied his appearing. Nevertheless, there was the inevitable clatter and dash of the Mounted Police, the inevitable band in the near distance braying out



*God Save the King*, the inevitable running up the royal standard on whatever flagstaff chanced to be above the royal head. The Prince shook hands with his companions in the royal box and took his seat, and then the show began, the culminating pageantry for which the rest had been the mere rehearsal.

Jacques Cartier and his sailors had come and gone, taking Donnaconna with them; and, with a few swift evolutions of the Jackies from the fleet, the stage was set for Fontainebleau. Bits of white railing sprang up from nowhere in particular; strings of gorgeous blossoms transformed wild bushes into shrubbery, and out of a humdrum little thicket in the foreground a fountain suddenly came leaping up to dance in the lengthening rays of sunset. Then, from a distant woodland far off to the westward, there came riding the long train of mounted courtiers, gorgeous in plumed hats and party-coloured silks and satins, their jaunty capes and skirts and winged sleeves dangling softly about their horses' shining flanks. Well in the lead came King Francis and his queen to take their stand beneath the canopy before the royal box, and behind them rode a slender figure whose appearing called forth a murmur of enthusiasm from the Quebeckers in the audience. Even Janet, awaiting her turn outside the stage, so far forgot her decorous training as to joggle Paul's elbow excitedly.

"Is n't she lovely?" she demanded.

"Corking," Paul replied profanely. "Who is she?"

"She's Mrs. Bertie Seward-Harlitt."

Paul whistled.

"That all?"

"It's quite enough," Janet said a bit severely. "She's related to everybody that counts, all over the whole Dominion, and she's just frightfully—" the word seemed squeezed out of her, as if her throat were congested by its own effort to express her emphasis; "exclusive. It's always the question, when new people come here, whether —"

"You don't say?" Paul cut in unfeelingly, and a bit too soon for Janet's liking, for Janet, in such moods, had scanty attraction for his boyish mind. "I say," he added, in quite another tone; "here come the Argyles. Look at Day! Is n't she a beauty in that green of hers? She's no end prettier than Madame Hyphen."

Then they fell silent, as the cavalcade came sweeping past them, the horses stepping carefully among the flock of sheep that cropped the grass directly in their pathway. Slowly the long line circled before the royal box, divided and came to a stand on either side of the canopy beneath which, still mounted, sat their king and queen. Once in position, they fell to chatting idly, as courtiers will, while pages ran about, offering their heaped-up baskets of fruit and their goblets of wine, while before them danced along a band of white-robed nymphs, followed by a

bevy of tiny satyrs, with vine leaves trailing through their hair and across their tunics of brown beast-skins. The dancing ended and the chatter ceased, though, when Jacques Cartier came, bringing his captive with him, and the courtiers crowded round to listen to the tales of wonder that he told. At the end, though, the attention wavered, and it was with a manifest pleasure that the courtiers saw the sturdy mariner made over to a bishop, and King Francis preparing to ride on once more.

Once more, then, the long cavalcade circled past the grandstand. Once more, every eye in the procession, even those of King Francis himself, furtively rolled upward to the royal box. Side by side and not far behind the king came Rob and Day, with Jack slightly in the lead. Among the other courtiers, many of whom were plainly at the mercy of their mounts, the riding of the three young strangers caused some comment. The Argyles, trained in the best of New York riding schools, were able to manage anything that wore a saddle; while Jack, riding since his little childhood, and accustomed to skurry across the African veldt on any half-broken pony that he chanced to meet, cared little whether his mount moved on four legs or on two. Accordingly, all three of them were giving comparatively free rein to their horses, fretted by long standing in the face of dancing beast-skins and of applauding crowds.

"All right, Day?" Rob queried, as her pony

kicked, and then fell to advancing cornerwise, prancing coquettishly as he came.

"All right," she answered, as she bent down to pat the pony's neck. "He only feels a little funny. I don't wonder. I do, myself, and I rather envy him the chance to frisk."

Rob rode as close to her as he dared, by reason of the sense of humour of his own mount.

"Observe the haughty lady down in front," he bade his sister; "the one they all made such a row about, when she came on! She's getting her come-uppance now, for sure."

Day's glance followed the direction of his eyes. Then, heedless of the eccentric evolutions of her own horse, she laughed outright.

"Poor lady!" she said. "I am rather afraid —"

"So's she," Rob interrupted. "There! She's off. Well, by Jove!"

For the come-uppance, by some unkind Fate, had happened just in front of the royal box. Mrs. Bertie Seward-Harlitt's steed had grown used to bands by now; but he saw no especial reason to expect to meet a symphony orchestra sitting about, out-doors, and he shied violently, as the violins took up a merry, strident theme. Mrs. Bertie Seward-Harlitt, as it chanced, was more accustomed to a landau than a saddle; and, accordingly, it was the inevitable that happened. The horse assumed the pace of an antic crab, and the rider parted with all of her haughtiness and a good deal of her charm, as, hunched up

and clinging to the horse's mane, she looked about her frantically in search of succour.

The moment lengthened; pace and hunchiness both increased, for all the lackeys were busy with other restive horses, and no one of them thought to cast a glance towards the haughty figure whose coming had seemed so full of resourcefulness and power. The haughty figure, hunchy now and correspondingly humble, closed her eyes and foresaw her finish. An instant later, she opened her eyes with a jerk. A red-velvet arm was steadying her to position. A companion hand, slim, brown and muscular beneath its covering ruffles, was shut upon her curb rein. Two level eyes were looking at her kindly, with no hint of mirth in their brown depths.

"He's a little frightened and very hard-bitted," the owner of the eyes said tranquilly. "If you don't mind my joining the ranks of the upper nobility, I think I'd better lead him off for you. He's ugly now, and needs a man's hand on him."

The rest of the pageants went their way: the flocking of the citizens to meet the Ursulines; the long line of civic and churchly pomp which went out to meet de Tracy; the Frontenac defiance, and then, last of all, the coming of the two royal armies, marching and countermarching side by side in perfect amity upon the very field where, a century and a half before, they spilled each other's blood. Now at length, their hatred ended, before an audience of their mingled races and in the city which they both

had helped to build, they halted to salute the man who would one day be their king, while bands and orchestra united in playing *Canada* and then the *Sauve le Roi*.

The last salute was given, the armies broke and scattered, the royal standard fell from above the royal box. The pageants were ended, and the climax of the celebration was already in the past. It had meant study and work and care almost unending, yet not a person of all those present at the final tableau would have denied that it all had been quite worth the while.

Crossing the dusty field behind the grandstand, Janet halted, as she heard her name. Turning, she found Mrs. Bertie Seward-Harlitt beside her, and Mrs. Bertie Seward-Harlitt's hand was held out to hers.

"Miss Leslie, I think? I used to know your Aunt Mabel, when we were in the convent; I ought to have known you, long ago. Are you willing to introduce your friend to me, the one in red? I want to thank him."

Five minutes later, Mrs. Bertie Seward-Harlitt turned away. Her final words, —

"And remember, Mr. Blanchard, that I am always at home on Tuesday afternoons," were plainly heard by all the group but one.

That one was Jack himself. With a hasty "Beg pardon!" he had sprung forward and jerked a baby backward out of the path of an approaching motor

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car. It was a detail noticed by no one but Amy Pope that the baby wore a blue satin coat that had seen better days. Another detail noted by her friendly eyes was the look of utter, abject weariness upon the face of the baby's elderly companion. In the chorus of talk which followed, however, she was too much interested in the pageants to remember to mention either of these details to Paul.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

**T**HE next Monday found everybody's nerves on edge, everybody as near to being cross as general training and individual disposition would allow.

A month of preparation, a week of actual achievement and a day which is a glorious climax to all which has gone before: these things are exhausting in themselves. Add to them a state of domestic upheaval when meal hours are irregular, the cook ill in bed and household work in arrears; add again a raw, cold day when the clouds hang gray and heavy, and the wind, sweeping up the river, seems to eat to the very marrow of one's bones: add these, and you have the main essentials of a nervous crisis. Everybody was tired out, a few were decidedly cross, and Amy Browne was sneezing until she had scant leisure to eat her breakfast. And the worst of it all was that there was another performance of the pageants scheduled for that same afternoon.

Amy Pope led the mutiny.

"I won't go a step to their old pageant, such a day as this."

Paul finished scooping out his grapefruit, one of a box which Wade, foreseeing famine, had thoughtfully added to his luggage.

"Then where'll be I?" he queried then.



"You can take Sidney."

Sidney laughed.

"Thanks, dear. I decline to be took as second fiddle, even if Paul is my cousin. Besides, I happen to have a partner of my own. Beg pardon, Amy?"

It was Amy Browne, this time, and she was offering remonstrance.

"Sidney Stayre! You won't think of going out to those Plains on such a day? You'll blow off into the river, and get a galloping consumption."

Sidney laughed again.

"Don't worry. I'm tough as a pine knot, and I never have a cold. Pound up, Rob, when you knock on wood; else, it does n't work the charm. Besides, I have a New England conscience. It's not fair to keep in all the fun, while royalty is looking on, and then drop out and spoil it, when the common herd can afford to buy their tickets."

"I thought you did n't believe in our class distinctions, Sidney," Janet rebuked her.

Sidney put her elbows on the table, for Lady Wadhams and the poodle were breakfasting in their room, that morning.

"I don't, after a fashion. At least, after a fashion, I do," she said luminously.

"What I love, Janet," Day said, too thoughtfully intent upon her subject to heed the little frown on Janet's brow; "is the sweet human courtesy of your British upper classes."

Janet's eyes flashed. Only Mrs. Argyle saw the flash, however, and she was too far from Day to check her speech without an obvious effort which would only increase the strain by bringing to bear upon it the general attention of the table.

"What do you mean, Day?" Janet's voice was elaborately polite.

Day laughed, as at some amusing recollection.

"It was on the reviewing stand, Friday; at least, one of it was. It was one of the named species, a lusty young giant of twenty or so, and he stood up on his seat and then opened his umbrella to keep off the sun. Of course, I'm used to the laws that govern college games at home; but, even allowing for my American bigotry, it did seem to me he was a little —"

Jack interposed, and gravely.

"I was beside Day, and I'm British. Nevertheless, it did seem to me he was very big."

Day swept on with her arraignment.

"And I asked the way of a man, the other day. He looked a gentleman, and he had a wife with him, and he surely was old enough to be discreet."

"Was he rude?" Rob queried, in sudden pugnacity.

"He wasn't anything at all. He gazed at my hat, and then at my shoes; but not at me. Then he turned his back and walked off, without answering a word."

"Up here, we don't speak to people till we have

been introduced," Janet said, a little too pointedly for Rob's taste.

"That's not speaking," he retorted. "It's just the sort of notice you give a corner lamp post. Nobody that was n't an utter cad would take such a thing as an attempt at conversation."

"Customs differ," Janet said briefly.

Rob's reply was equally brief.

"Thank the Lord, they do!"

By this time, Paul, as well as Mrs. Argyle, was watching Janet's face. What he saw there led him to remonstrate.

"When I was a little chap," he observed at nobody in particular; "my mother taught me I must n't criticize the pudding, when I went a-visiting."

Day's laugh was free from any animosity.

"If that's aimed at me, I was criticizing the upper crust of the pie," she corrected gayly.

Amy Browne suppressed a sneeze, before she spoke.

"Day, you're positively underbred," she argued. "It's only the submerged tenth who admit there are such things as classes."

"I do," Janet said flatly, and the two crisp words once more disturbed the surface of the talk which Paul and Amy had been at such pains to smooth.

No one answered her, however, and the meal went on in silence to a hasty end. As they left the table, Rob linked his arm in that of Day with a manifest air of protection. The gesture was not lost on Janet,

who gave a hostile sniff and betook herself in the direction of the kitchen. Paul overtook her in the butler's pantry.

"What's your hurry?" he asked as casually as if Janet's eyes had not forestalled the answer to his question.

"I have things to do."

"What's the use of getting busy, so early in the morning?"

"It is almost ten o'clock," she argued, more for the sake of opposition in general than for anything else.

"Suppose it is? Let it be almost noon, if you choose. We're only just through breakfast, and breakfast time is always early. Let the *busy* wait, and come and play with the rest of us for a while, before we all go at it."

"Mary needs me," Janet answered briefly, and Paul could not gainsay her, for Mary Browne, downstairs again in spite of the doctor's orders, might well be in need of almost any sort of help.

"All right. I'll come, too," he said tranquilly.

But Janet shook her head, although her injured dignity could not wholly repress her smile.

"I don't want you, thank you."

His honest gray eyes half mirthful, half anxious, Paul took the bull by the horns and hung on.

"Janet, you're cranky, to-day."

She nodded, in swift decision.

"I know it. What's more, I'm cross."

"At me?"

"No, never!"

The heartiness of her voice surprised him, and his face cleared a little. Manlike, he leaped the next point entirely.

"Honestly, I don't think Argyle meant to be a beast," he urged her.

"Perhaps not," she admitted grudgingly. "Still, he was."

Paul undertook to argue.

"Not really. He would n't; he's not the sort. It's only that he worships Day, and gets a little hot when anybody disagrees with her. It isn't you alone. I have noticed it before. And you did disagree with Day, you know." Paul's accent might have proceeded from the lips of his own great grandsire.

"I should have been ashamed of myself, if I had n't," Janet responded testily.

"May be. May be." Paul dismissed that phase of the question in all haste. "Anyhow, you did; and that brought him to the rescue, for he was in earnest at first. But that did n't last, you know."

Janet bent on him a glance of withering scorn.

"What bats you men are, Paul! You mean well, I suppose; but you don't mend matters much, when you try to patch up a peace. I've known Rob Argyle longer a good deal than you have."

"Well?" Paul asked her, for her pause betokened a desire to have him say something, and he was a

little at a loss to know what that something ought to be.

Janet silently traced a pattern on the shelf before her, silently drew her forefinger through and through the pattern. Then she looked up and spoke, and her voice was unsteady.

"It's not the first time I've had a fuss with Rob on that same subject. I know what he thinks of this country. I know what he thinks of us Canadians. And I can't sit by, the only Canadian among you all, and hear our ways made fun of and despised."

"Blanchard is Canadian, too," Paul suggested, from sheer lack of anything else to say.

This time, his suggestion went all wrong. Janet's chin lifted itself in its well-known gesture of extreme hostility.

"A Canadian? Yes, of course. But not of my sort, though," she said, with a crisp finality which made Paul blink as at a physical blow, for he had long since forgotten that, once upon a time, he had uttered similar sentiments in talking to Amy Pope.

And it was Jack himself who unwittingly precipitated the next crisis, not Rob at all. Rob was on his guard, warned by Paul who had come striding into his room, a half-hour after breakfast.

"I did n't hear you say 'Come,'" he observed, as he cast himself into a chair before his host.

"Naturally not," Rob retorted. "I did n't hear you knock."

"I did n't." Paul chuckled. "I came by stealth

and on a secret mission. I say, Argyle, you'd best be a little careful in your walk and conversation. Janet is getting on her nerves."

"Quite the contrary, she's already got," Rob corrected cheerfully. "I found that out for myself, this morning."

"So I noticed. Later, I pursued investigations on my own account."

"Get stung?" Rob queried. "No; you need n't sit up and get huffy, old chap. I've known Janet longer than you have."

Paul rose, crossed to the window, faced about.

"I knew her first, though, knew her in their palmy days," he answered doggedly. "I know the things she's had to step down from. What's more, knowing her, I know the way 't was bound to rasp her feelings. Argyle, I like Janet Leslie; like her a whole lot."

Rob sat staring up at him lazily. He liked Paul, heartily admired Paul's championship of the absent Janet. Nevertheless, still being Rob Argyle, he was bound to tease.

"I like Janet, too; but I can't say I like her little tantrums," he remarked.

Paul stuck his hands into his pockets.

"Then what makes you stir them up?" he asked shortly.

"I stir? I would n't stir a pussy-cat," Rob argued. "Still, I can't well sit by and hear her slanging Day. You could n't, if you had a sister."

Unwittingly, Rob had delivered a home thrust. Paul did have a sister, as it chanced, a sister daintily superior to all his boyish interests and concerns. He would as soon have thought of championing the Queen of Sheba as of rising up to the defence of pretty Judith.

"N-no," he admitted. "I suppose not. Fact is, I honestly have n't much idea what started the row, in the first place. The main thing is that we've got to go easy, or we shall bust up again. Janet's tired out, poor little soul, and cranky. When she gets cranky — she always did, you know, even when we were at Grande Rivière — she gets all sorts of queer notions into her head. Just now, she thinks we're all in league against her and her Canada."

Rob nodded.

"Exactly. It's quite chronic. Proceed."

"That's all. I tried, just for argument," Paul laughed, notwithstanding his recent protestations of loyalty; "to point out to her that Blanchard was also Canadian. I thought I was rather clever to think it up; but the idea did n't seem to please her in the least. She turned and rended me, and likewise rended him."

The laugh died out of Rob's blue eyes.

"She did; did she?" he asked crisply.

Paul sought to excuse the situation.

"Janet is a good little soul, even if she is cranky," he urged again. "Besides, I know what her family



used to stand for here. No wonder now and then she turns a little snobbish."

There was a pause. Then, —

"Oh," Rob made comprehensive comment.

And Paul, hearing, decided it was time for him to leave the room. Outside the door, however, he freed his mind.

"Hang it, Janet always was a little Tartar!" he observed. "After all, though, I'm for her, right or wrong. A girl like that is never half so cranky, once she finds out she's got somebody to help fight her battles for her." From which, it was obvious that Janet Leslie was by no means the only girl whom Paul had known.

Left to himself, Rob digested his warning, made mental note of thankful liking for the boy who had come to offer it, resolved to abide by it as best he could, and then forgot the matter utterly. Of course, had he taken the affair in all seriousness and sought out the path of sanctity, he would have hunted up Janet and gone about making peace. Instead, he hunted up his stick, for these strenuous days had been telling on his knee; and, stick in one hand, cap in the other, he sallied down the stairs in search of pleasure. He found his pleasure by way of Sidney and the upper terrace. Heedless of the biting wind, they loitered there through half the morning, leaning on the rail, watching the war ships, and talking of the endless interests they shared in common. Rob's existence might have been cloyed with too many girls.

They would have been willing to do the cloying, for they one and all were eager to be friends with the great, jovial boy with the limp in his knee and the rollicking fun in his blue eyes. However, they failed in their endeavours. Rob smiled cheerily upon them all, then went his way with Day and Sidney and, now and then, Janet. But Janet, he confessed to Day, was like curry; a little of her went a long, long way. Day, on the other hand, was merely half of himself; and of Sidney he never tired. No matter how long the intervals between their talks, they began just where they had left off. Her fun matched his own; and no one, not even Day, could be more strongly, sanely helpful in his graver hours.

Jack, meanwhile, completely heedless of the weather, had gone faring forth with Day and Amy Pope. The roughness of the river, all choppy with the wind, had tempted them, and they had taken themselves off by the Island boat. They returned, wind-blown and hilarious, to meet on the steps Rob and Sidney, as hilarious as themselves and far more blown; and, with the slightest possible delay to smooth their plumage, the five went trooping in to luncheon, full of ozone and jokes, and hungry as a group of bears. And Janet had spent the morning in the kitchen; and, just at noon, her tea cakes had fallen flat.

Nevertheless, until the meal was nearly over and Lady Wadhams had left the table, there was no out-

ward sign of friction. True, Janet was quite obviously blighted, quite obviously in a frame of mind to take the hilarity of the others as an insult directed at herself. However, Amy Browne was also blighted, by reason of her cold, and Irene Jessup, by reason of Wade Winthrop's approaching departure; so, from being in such good and reasonable company, Janet's attitude escaped all notice. The actual meal ended by the consumption of everything in sight, Janet sat tapping her fingers restlessly on the cloth, in token that she wished the others would push back their chairs and end their talk. The others did nothing of the kind. Instead of that, heedless of their manners, they pushed back their plates, plumped their elbows on the table and fell into animated discussion. Janet ceased her restless tapping, pushed back her chair an inch or so, and sat aggressively, rebukingly erect, while she smiled disdainfully at nothing in particular.

"What gets me," Rob turned slightly in his chair, and flung one arm across the corner of its back; "is the amount of gray matter that has gone into this thing. Take the two armies by themselves, I suppose the dress is accurate in each little detail. It would be less work to costume an entire play."

Jack, across the table, looked up at his friend.

"Do you know, Rob," he said thoughtfully; "nothing in the world has made me realize how I am getting Americanized, like that final scene."

Janet shot one swift glance of hostility at the

speaker, whose level eyes were fixed on Rob. Then she resumed her disdainful smiling.

"As to how, old man?" Rob asked.

"The way it strikes me. Everybody else thinks it a beautiful piece of allegory. I suppose I should, too, if I'd kept on living here; but, for the life of me, I can't help seeing the funny side."

"Me, too," Paul murmured; but no one heeded him, for Janet was speaking now, and hotly.

"I can't see anything at all funny in it."

Strange to say, in all his past experience of Janet, Jack had never seen her really roused. Accordingly, he had no notion of what her accent portended, and, after a glance at her, he went on, just as he had begun.

"Do what you will, you can't make the audience forget that they're supposed to be the armies that butchered each other on that very spot. Under those conditions, it is a little comic, their marching up and down together for a while, and then just fading out into space once more."

Rob laughed.

"Where's your sentiment, Jack? It's the peace of nations, and all that."

Day always said that Jack was never half so likable as when he smiled. He smiled now, and the lighting of his face took from its intentness and added the boyish charm which now and then came back to him, despite his seven and twenty years.

"When I was a little chap in school," he argued;

"and got licked for fighting, I had to shake hands with the other chap to prove I'd made it up again. Why don't they do that, too, while they're about it?"

"I think it would be a very pretty scene," Day stated gravely; "if Mr. Montcalm and Mr. Wolfe fell on each other's necks and kissed."

"Like *Mr. Pig*?" Rob asked her in a swift aside, since no one else but Day could be expected to share his memory of their childhood's classic.

Jack's smile widened to a laugh.

"By Jove, you had it, too!" he exclaimed. "'My best and dearest son!' *Mr. Pig* fits the case exactly."

Curiously enough, Janet's self-control, which would have stood out against any amount of argument, went down before an epithet. She turned on Jack her angry eyes.

"Thank you, Jack Blanchard," she said crisply. "I've been waiting for some time to find out what sort of a Canadian you called yourself, and now I know. What's more, I am obliged to you for the information. Up here, my friends and I have a disagreeable name for the Canadians who go into the States to live, and then come back again to laugh at us, and call our heroes pigs."

Hasty, illogical, unmerited, the words flew across the table, sharp as arrows, and, from their very sharpness, as full of hurt. For a moment, Jack stared in blank amazement at the girl whom he had judged almost a woman, turned now to the likeness

of an angry child. Then his smile came back to him, full of its old friendly kindness.

"You didn't understand me, Janet," he said lightly.

But Janet, angry at him for rousing her antagonism, angry at herself for losing her self-control, angry at the others for pausing in their talk to stare at her in wonder for her outbreak, tired out in body and in nerves and feeling herself alone at bay before them all, Janet proceeded to lose her head entirely.

"I don't know any especial reason I should understand you," she answered shortly. "Even if we did happen, both of us, to have been born Canadians, you must admit it is the only thing we have in common."

There was an instant of utter silence. Then Amy Pope rose briskly to her feet.

"Jack," she said, calling him by his given name for the first time in their acquaintance; "don't you remember you said you were going to take me up the glaciis to watch the regattas?"

And Jack followed her, his honest nature for the once rejoicing in a fib.

## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

**I**T was a meeker Janet who sought Jack out, next morning, and offered him her hand.

"I'm the child who had to be licked for fighting," she quoted, with an attempted joke. "I've come to shake hands and say I'm sorry."

His hand shut on her fingers, clammy with her nervousness.

"That's all right, Janet," he said kindly. "I dare say I was n't quite polite in what I said. I did n't mean to be rude, though."

"I did," she made unexpected response.

"I'm sorry," he said. "After all, though, it must have been a bit my own fault; there's generally fault on both sides, when there's a row. I hate rows, Janet."

Steadily, kindly, his level brown eyes were looking into hers. There was no reservation in their friendliness, no rebuke; yet Janet's eyes fell away from before them.

Again her response was unexpected, the more so in its very seriousness.

"I don't," she said slowly. "I wish I did; but now and then I rather like them."

His hand still holding hers, he appeared to be considering intently.

"I don't see why," he said at length.

"I do," she said shortly. "Unreasonable as I am, I don't always like to fight for nothing. But now and then it is such a relief to speak out and say just what you think. Don't you ever get tired of smirking along through life, pretending you like things that you utterly hate?"

So tempestuous was this new outbreak that Jack prudently suppressed the laugh which wellnigh choked him. And yet there was some truth in Janet's words.

"I don't mean to do that sort of thing," he answered, with the gravity that somehow matched his wide, straight shoulders and his level eyes.

"How do you keep from doing it, I'd like to know?" she demanded.

"By not hating things," he told her quietly, and then despised himself for taking refuge in his years to give her the rebuke she yet so richly deserved.

Janet missed the rebuke in studying the fact.

"Don't you ever hate things?" she demanded, for a second time.

"Not often. What's the use?"

"How do you help it?"

He laughed.

"By dodging them, before they come within hating distance," he assured her gayly.

"But you can't, always," Janet persisted.

He hesitated for a moment. Then, honestly and briefly, he spoke out his creed.



"When it comes to a grip at close quarters, Janet, things are n't ever so beastly as we think they're going to be." Once his words were spoken, he paused to allow them to sink into her mind, sure from his three-year study of her character that she would recall them later. Then he changed the subject abruptly and harked back to her former phrase. "Was the licking bad?" he inquired, with intentional lightness.

Her mind was too intent upon the later phases of their talk to remember what had gone before.

"The licking?" she queried blankly.

"Yes. The one you said you had to take for getting into a row," he reminded her.

Janet's face lost its intentness, darkened.

"Yes," she admitted shortly; "awful. The ones you give yourself always are, you know."

Janet's words contained the truth, yet not the whole truth. Her worst discipline, perhaps, had come out of her own conscience; but the first came by way of Mrs. Argyle.

"Janet, dear." And a tap on Janet's door, the previous evening, had added explanation of the purpose of the words.

"Come in, Mrs. Argyle," Janet had answered listlessly.

Mrs. Argyle turned the knob and opened the door. Janet, weary and dejected, was taking off her pageant costume. She looked up at Mrs. Argyle with a forced and uncertain smile; but the snap had all gone out

of her and, with it, all her girlish poise. The day had been cold, the pageant long, and Janet, tired with the reaction from her last week's triumph, was yet more tired with the reaction from her broken self-control. Beneath her high-piled hair, her face looked wan and pitiful, as it turned to Mrs. Argyle. And Mrs. Argyle, womanly, motherly, had been a tempestuous girl, herself, and not so very long ago.

"Janet child," she said quietly; "you're too tired to dress and go down again, to-night, and so am I. Slip on a kimono, and cuddle down here on the couch with me, and have a little talk."

For a moment, Janet stiffened with the innate resentment she always showed to any offer of unasked affection. Mrs. Argyle, busy with folding up the purple satin frock, had turned her back to the girl, and was, to all seeming, quite unconscious of the momentary chill in Janet's manner. The chill was only short-lived, for, at heart, the girl was longing for a word of understanding, longing yet more for an opportunity to talk out all her bitterness down to its very dregs, to pour her troubles and her tiredness and her irritation into a sympathetic ear. Moreover, she knew from past experience that Mrs. Argyle was always quick to see both sides, even where her own children were concerned.

"After all, though, Janet," Mrs. Argyle said at last, when bit by bit the matter had been talked out between them; "it's my impression that, both as hostess and, as woman, you can't very well get on

without an apology to Jack. I see your side of it, dear child: that you were tired out and cross, and that now and then we Americans, all of us, are a little too outspoken as to what we think of things up here. Still, the fact remains that you were rude, cuttingly rude to a guest in your own house."

"Jack's not my guest," the girl mutinied swiftly.

"What is he, then?"

"Why, he — he just came. I supposed you asked him, or else Day," Janet said vaguely.

"I did propose it. Still, you are the hostess, in a sense, for the party is in your house." Mrs. Argyle let a little pause fall before her next words. "Besides that, Jack was not at all to blame."

Again the girl mutinied.

"You just think so, Mrs. Argyle, because you like him."

"Don't you, Janet?" The question came quietly.

"Yes, sometimes. Not when he is so everlastingly smug, though."

"Jack is n't smug, Janet." Mrs. Argyle spoke with quick decision. "That is the very last word to apply to him."

"Not smug, exactly; but I do wish, just now and then, he would distrust himself a little."

"Why should he? More than you, or I, I mean?"

Janet's smile spoke volumes. Her reply, though, was short.

"I think, Mrs. Argyle, we neither of us need to put it into words," she said.

"I think, perhaps, we'd better," Mrs. Argyle answered her. "We've gone too far now, Janet, to be able to dodge the point."

"I'm not dodging," the girl replied perversely. "It only seems rather like criticizing you to say it out. Still, if I must, I must. It's only this: if you choose to swallow Jack Blanchard whole, brass buttons and all, you're welcome. I can't do it."

Rob Argyle's sense of humour came straight from his mother. Now she struggled bravely to down the share of it she still held as her own, for Janet's picture was vivid, albeit somewhat sketchy. Moreover, simply as Mrs. Argyle was prone to take her social situation, there was yet something approaching the ludicrous, to her mind, in Mrs. John Argyle's having a social creed dictated to her by a girl in her teens. A glance at Janet's face, however, showed but too plainly that, in this present mood of perversity, neither smiles nor arguments would avail with Janet. Mrs. Argyle was too wise a woman to waste words in a discussion that could only end in increased antagonism. Instead, she rose and faced Janet, holding out her hand.

"Good night, child," she said quietly. "Have a good long sleep, and you'll feel rested in the morning." And, bending, she kissed the passive, unresponsive cheek.

The summary close of the discussion led to a sleepless night. The sleepless night led, next day, to apology. Mrs. Argyle's peaceful exit had left Janet

with no one in range to fight with but herself. Her fighting mood was still upon her and, lacking any other adversary, she took it out upon herself with vigour. She went to bed, feeling herself an ill-used individual against whom all the rest of the world was banded, its warpaint on. The long, quiet hours of darkness brought reflection; and Janet arose, next morning, somewhat chastened. She still believed herself ill-used; but, if she were to pose as candidate for universal sympathy, she must see to it that her skirts were free from blame. And she really had been somewhat to blame. She assured herself of that in the intervals of wondering why Day and Sidney did not come to bed. For Mrs. Argyle had bidden both the girls to share her room, that night, and so prevent renewal of discussion.

Janet arose, then, after long hours of discussion with herself alone. Lacking an adversary to state the other side of the case, her own side strengthened. Persecuted, misunderstood, a bit ill-used, she yet had been much, very much to blame. Her first duty, then, was to annul that blame by offering contrite apology. With that end in view, she sought out Jack. A good deal to her secret annoyance, he did not in return abase himself nearly as much as she deemed fitting. However, the tragedy was in the background, wiped out by apology and courteous penitence. All but Janet proceeded to forget the matter absolutely, as one forgets the indigestion caused by last week's over-feasting, and life within the Leslie house, the

Prince and poodle both departed and the pageants done, took up its normal course of summer idleness.

It was quite the result of chance that the Argyles went away for a few days, directly after the tiffs and tribulations of that black Monday. An old school friend of Mrs. Argyle, unseen for more than twenty years, was summering at Lake Massawippi. She had heard that Mrs. Argyle was in Quebec, and had written to demand a visit. Mrs. Argyle, answering, had begged an invitation for her children whom she was anxious to show off to her old comrade. The visit was to last for ten days. Then Mrs. Argyle would join her husband at Heatherleigh, while Rob and Day returned to finish out their Canadian summer.

Wade had already gone, and the announcement of this second departure caused consternation in the little group, a consternation which broke out into open lamentations on the part of Jack who saw them off.

"Do hurry back," he urged forlornly, as he left them in the train. "Without you, we'll fall into shreds and tatters and, what's worse, we'll get the shreds and tatters into no end of a snarl. I never thought you'd bring me up here and abandon me like this; and I've a grim presentiment that things will all go bad, the hour your backs are turned."

"Not with Sidney," Day assured him valiantly.

He shook his head.

"Sidney is Sidney, not you," he responded. Then, smiling bravely, he dropped her hand.

Nevertheless, he stood long upon the platform, staring after the empty perspective where there once had been a vestibuled doorway framing two yellow heads; and, when at last he turned away and sought the ferry, his heart was unreasoningly heavy.

In the days that followed, he missed the Argyles increasingly. During their long separations, heretofore, he had been in New York, and busy. Now, idle and lacking them, he missed them to a curious extent, missed them in ways that the others were powerless to make good. Strange to say, no one so filled the emptiness around him as did Paul. This was by no means merely because Paul's was the only other masculine point of view in the diminished house-party; but because Paul's nature, albeit far more boisterous, yet held the same elements of big-hearted kindness as did Jack's own. Little by little, then, they two drifted into a sort of intimacy, talking together in one room or the other until late at night, exchanging experiences and digesting each other's opinions on whatever question the day had brought forth. All in all, despite the seven-year separation in their ages, the opinions varied far less than did the experiences which had gone to form them, and, night after night, they parted better friends than they had been, the night before. Irresponsible in his hilarity, totally unsuppressible in his slang and quaint conceits, Paul was showing his true

self to Jack in those long talks, and the true self was winning even conservative Jack's approval.

Their talks ranged over all subjects upon the earth, under the heavens and beneath the Leslie roof, so it was no especial wonder that now and then they touched upon Janet. Jack was forgiving, Paul loyal; yet neither one of them could deny that Janet was still upon her dignity, and that that dignity was still a little bit aggrieved. Curiously enough, the girl was taking her grievance out upon the other girls who, all but Day, had been silent spectators of the little fray. Paul was avowedly her champion. She had avowedly made her peace with Jack. Under all these conditions, she was tacitly pledged to friendship with them; and, feeling the need for manifesting her displeasure with things in general upon some one in particular, she chose the Amys, Sidney and Irene as her especial objects. There was no open friction, but something infinitely worse, a sense of general discomfort, like the heavy oppression which goes before a thunder shower in the next township.

Among themselves, the girls discussed it in moods varying from merriment to hot, hot wrath. The two Amys were for packing their trunks and taking the first train for home; but Irene, and, still more strongly, Sidney counselled patience. A break-up now would lead to a permanent breach. Janet's moods were never very lasting. Once she came out of them, she was prompt to see and admit their absurdity. Besides, after all, they really were not guests, in



the strictest sense of the word. And besides again, the Argyles would be back, next week. Best wait for them, and then with them discuss the matter fully. From all accounts, they had seen Janet before under similar conditions. Moreover, they were the instigators of the whole party; as a mere matter of courtesy to them, the party could not be allowed to break up in their temporary absence.

And, meanwhile, more and more the four girls were left to themselves to talk the matter over. Janet was showing an increased desire for the society of Gladys Horth; and into that society, willy-nilly, she dragged with her Paul and Jack.

The Argyles had gone away, on Friday, the day of the last pageant. On Wednesday of the following week, this cheery state of things was still in evidence, in evidence and, Sidney confessed to herself with grim forebodings, rapidly becoming worse. The four girls had taken themselves to Saint Joachin for the day. The plan had developed suddenly in the fertile brain of Amy Pope, when, the night before, Janet had chanced to mention that Gladys and she, with Paul and Jack, were going up the river to visit the year-old ruins of the fallen bridge.

Gladys lunched at the Leslie house, that day. Directly after luncheon, they started off, to all seeming the most jovial of quartettes, for the day was fine, the luncheon had been hilarious and the expedition promised something on the score of novelty. Jack and Gladys were in the lead, as often happened

in those days; but Paul and Janet were so close behind as to overhear their talk, overhear, too, a wholly unexpected greeting that met Jack on the Breakneck Stairs.

"Mist' Blanchard! Glad to see yuh, suh! Yuh lookin' fine."

For one instant, Jack stared blankly at the sable, grinning face. Then he held out his hand.

"Norman! I'm glad to see you. How have you been, all these years? And are you still on the same old run?"

Gladys, hearing, looked horrified, mystified, suspicious; but Janet, after one glance at Jack and the negro, clasping hands in welcome, another glance at Gladys, had turned scarlet, then grown very white.

"Come," she said shortly; "we'd best go on, and let him overtake us."

But Paul, interested and amused and totally unmoved by what seemed to him a bit of comedy, uttered a protest.

"No hurry. We've any amount of time."

But Janet, still white and unaccountably nervous, hastened down the steps at such a pace that they were half way to the wharf, before Jack overtook them.

"Norman was a capital chap," he remarked unconcernedly; "altogether the best porter I ever had."

"Porter?" Gladys echoed, and the question, although brief, was in italics.

Jack's unconcern decreased no whit. In fact, there

was no reason that it should. To his downright mind, he had nothing to conceal.

"Yes. He was porter on my old run to Springfield. We were together, all one winter, and he never once shirked in all that time, took the best possible care of his car, and his passengers, and even," he laughed, as at some sudden recollection; "even his conductor."

Gladys flashed one glance at Janet. Then she queried sweetly, —

"How long since you had seen him, Mr. Blanchard?"

Jack stuck his fists into his pockets, and considered. He looked a veritable boy, as he tramped on beside the pretty young Canadian, for the unexpected meeting had brought with it all sorts of merry memories of what had really been a hard-working past. The hard work was all forgotten now, however; there only lingered the thought of the occasional good times, the hearty liking of his old companions, the loyalty of his many porters, the favourite of whom had but just now gone on up the stairs. After the sultry atmosphere of the past few days inside the Leslie house, all this came back to Jack like a long-wished-for whiff of ozone. Face and bearing betrayed the exhilaration it had brought to him, an exhilaration which added ten-fold to his attractiveness. And, by his side, the pretty young Canadian felt the attraction, felt it could atone for certain other things — almost. Not quite, however.

But Jack had finished counting time.

"Three years," he said. "No, by Jove! It's four. It does n't seem so long as that, since I went off the run."

Gladys made careless assent.

"Four years? The man must have a good memory; or else, you must have made a strong impression." Then, smiling still, she turned to Janet. "But, Janet," she said, speaking quite slowly and distinctly; "I was sure you told me —"

Purposely she allowed her sentence to die away, unended. Gladys Horth might be outspoken, might be a little too conservative in drawing her social lines. Nevertheless, it would have been quite unthinkable to her, the needless wounding of any man, least of all, such a man as Jack Blanchard had proved himself to be. For Gladys Horth, knowing Jack better, liked him unfeignedly, however regrettable she regarded certain aspects of his past existence.

Bravely, defiantly Janet sought to meet the eyes of Gladys; but her glance wavered, fell, then turned away, while once again her colour changed to dark, dark red and then to ashy white. An instant later, she gave a queer, smothered little laugh, and, stepping forward, caught Jack by the sleeve.

"Come, Jack, do hurry; we're going to miss the boat," she said, with a forced briskness.

But, as she spoke, her eyes, shifting uneasily, met the gray, steady eyes of Paul; and Paul's gaze was perplexed, full of trouble.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

QUITE naturally, Paul sought Sidney out, that night, told her of the little scene, and demanded explanation. Paul, like most boys, hated gossip. Still, Sidney was his cousin, and it was never really gossip to talk things over with one's cousin. Moreover, he felt the situation needed to be explained. The sweetness of Gladys, all that afternoon, had been no less ominous of ill than was Janet's evident abstraction. Thanks to Jack's complete unconsciousness of any cause for a situation, the afternoon had passed off with apparent smoothness. Still, to Paul's watchful eye, it was manifest that the two girls were only waiting to be alone together, in order to say Things to each other. Lacking all clue to the mystery which seemed surrounding him, Paul was conscious of a masculine curiosity to know what it was those Things would be.

When Sidney did supply the clue, Paul's disgust knew no bounds. By birth, by home training, and by his school and college life, Paul Addison had been nourished in too wholesome an atmosphere to have much sympathy for the reported strictures of Gladys Horth. His own early utterances of similar import had been made half in jest; they had been repented entirely, once he had come into real con-

tact with Jack. Moreover, lacking sympathy with Gladys, he also lacked all toleration for Janet's intentional deception, and his gray eyes blazed angrily, the while he listened.

"The blasted little sneak!" he burst out hotly, as soon as Sidney paused in the story which, of set purpose, she had softened all she could.

"Don't be too hard on her, Paul," she begged him.

"I couldn't. She deserves every bit she's getting," he returned a little roughly, for his boyish code of honour included even certain reservations among lies. "I hate a liar, and I hate a snob, and I hate a sneak; and she's all three."

Sidney's face was full of trouble; but Paul was far too angry now to heed. In fact, his anger mounted, as he grasped the details involved in the affair.

"Do you realize," he demanded suddenly, as he turned on Sidney with a savageness he might have shown the culprit; "that, all this summer long, she has been calling herself friends with Jack, going on from day to day, letting him trust her and talk to her and about her as a friend; has been letting his mother play propriety for us all, and, all this very time, has been ashamed to acknowledge the fellow for what he really is? Sidney, it makes me —" No word seemed strong enough for him. Silently he ran his fingers through his short, thick hair until, as once more he turned to face her, it stood wildly

erect, a stubby halo around his flushed and freckled face.

However, girls at best are never very logical. In theory, Sidney demanded careful grooming of her friends. As a matter of fact, her cousin in his evening state array had never been so dear to her, never so absolutely likable as now when, his collar slowly wilting and his hair in tousled spikes, he faced her, red with anger upon Jack's behalf. None the less, according to her code which demanded the defence of any girl to any boy, she sought to allay his wrath.

"Remember, Paul," she bade him; "that you don't quite get Janet's point of view."

"Do you, Tids?" he questioned hotly.

"Not exactly," Sidney made confession. "We can't, you know, you and I. We're Americans, in the first place, and the lines we draw don't fit into theirs. Besides, your mother and my father are just about alike. They both of them have taught us what the things are that really, truly count."

Paul swung around on his heel and stalked to the window.

"I should hope they had," he answered then. "I hate the ground she takes, Tids, hate it like poison. Still, I could forgive all that, if she had n't lied to Gladys."

"She did n't really lie," Sidney reminded him.

"Really, she did!" And as, reversing her accent, Paul flung her own words back at her, Sidney felt

another, stronger throb of pride at owning such a cousin.

There came a pause. Then, —

“Do the Argyles know?” Paul asked at length.

Sidney looked up, and there came into her voice a note of dignity which matched his of the moment before.

“The mischief was done, before I knew it,” she answered. “I was too late to help it; but, at least, I could help their knowing it had happened. There was no need for them to know. It would have been hurting them for nothing; and they never, never would have forgiven Janet.”

“The others know?”

“The girls? Yes. We all were there, when Janet told us.”

Paul looked up in surprise.

“She told you? Told you, herself?”

Then the first note of bitterness came into Sidney’s voice.

“Yes. She appeared to think she had done rather a clever thing.”

“Oh!” Paul once more fell silent for a space. When at last he spoke, his voice had lost all its animation. “Well,” he said slowly; “party’s over, mischief’s made. Tids, what’s doing next? To make the best of it, I mean?”

“Just that,” Sidney told him gravely; “make the best of it, and say as little about it as possible. I’ll tell the other girls, to-night, and warn them to keep



still. Mercifully, Rob and Day are n't here. Maybe we can keep it from them altogether."

"Unless it leads to bitter complications," Paul suggested. "Mrs. Blanchard is nothing but a mole; she'll never catch on to anything. Meanwhile, though, what about Jack himself?"

But, meanwhile, Jack himself was the most unconcerned member of all the little party. This fact was made evident, next morning at breakfast, when Paul was glum and silent, Janet nervously pugnacious, and the other girls voluble in their anxiety to forestall an awkward situation. Jack alone talked on according to his wonted steady fashion. Then, as he rose from the table, he turned to his mother.

"I'm so sorry I can't go out with you, this morning," he said regretfully; "but Norman told me, yesterday, that Savarin was down on his luck, ill or something. He was the French fellow who used to alternate the run with me, the best little chap that ever lived, and always doing me a good turn. I think I'll look him up, this morning. He's down at the Jeffrey Hale, and, from what Norman told me, rather forlorn." And, totally unaware that he had cast a stone into the pool on which the four girls had been busy pouring oil, he nodded his farewells and went striding away out of the house.

Jack gone, Janet shut up in the library with Gladys Horth, and Paul in the dumps, the morning dragged perceptibly. The drag was by no means lessened by Jack's telephoning up at noon that he

had been detained by business, and would not be home to luncheon. It was late afternoon, when he did appear, so late that Janet was just wondering whether she might as well not ring for Elsie to take away the tray. Moreover, when he came, he was too much absorbed in other things to care for tea.

"Give an account of yourself, you truant," Amy Browne demanded gayly, as he crossed the threshold, for, during the past three winters in New York, she and Jack had grown to be excellent friends.

His nod and smile were at Amy; but his words were for Janet.

"I'm sorry to be so beastly late," he said contritely. "I had no idea how the time was going. Don't keep the tray for me. I was late about my lunch. Besides, I've been too busy to care much about tea."

Deliberately Janet filled his cup, dropping in the proper number of lumps with the unquestioning precision on which she prided herself so much. Then she offered him the cup.

"You found your friend?" she asked, and her interest was plainly perfunctory, as of one who washed her hands completely of any share in the answer.

Jack stirred his tea.

"Yes, poor little chap!" he said slowly. "It's worse than I supposed. He is down with enteric. They say the city's full of it."

"Really? I had n't heard." Again Janet spoke

with courteous remoteness, just as she might have spoken to Tolstoi, or Count Okuma, or to Mary Browne's fourth cousin once removed.

"It's mainly in one quarter; they're tracing it to an old well they tapped, the day the main burst, two weeks ago. So they told me at the hospital, that is. Anyway, it's caught poor Savarin." Then he turned to Sidney. "You may remember him, a little brown-haired chap in glasses. He took you up, that first summer you were here. I know, for he remembered Bungay."

Sidney shook her head; but her denial was far more personal and full of interest than Janet's questions.

"Is he very ill?"

"No; not so very. He's a good deal uncomfortable, and more worried. I can't say I wonder, though. Since I've seen him, the fellow's married; he has a wife and baby, somewhere in the Townships. There's nobody else to look out for them, and the people at the hospital tell me he is in for a long pull." And Jack fell silent, fell, too, to stirring his untasted, cooling tea.

Sidney watched him intently for a minute or two. Watching, she was quite well aware that Jack had something on his mind; that his story was by no means all told; moreover, that the final chapter, yet untold, was bound to be the most important one of all. Scenting a possible crisis, her mind leaped this way and that to discover the direction whence it was

to come. Then she gave it up, unable to fathom the working of Jack's mind. She gave it up; but she prayed secretly that Jack, with masculine obtuseness, might not have blundered upon any plan fated to antagonize Janet still more. And, meanwhile, Janet sat and smiled inscrutably at the tea-pot.

At last Jack lifted his eyes, such honest, steady eyes, so true and kindly, and swept them around the little group. He saw Janet's inscrutable smile, his mother's adoring gaze, the friendly faces of the Amys and Irene; then he looked back to Sidney. She always understood. To her, accordingly, he addressed the final chapter of his story.

"You see," he blurted out, unaccountably embarrassed at finding himself the centre of so much attention, especially when he had a tale of such sort to tell; "it really is hard on the chap. He has nothing at all but his salary, and that's mighty little, as we know. Eh, mother? And the nurse tells me he's down for 'at least six weeks; that is, until he's fit to run again. All that time, you see, he's got to lie out of his salary, even if he keeps his place."

Amy Pope sat bending forward, her hands clasped loosely around her knees, her eyes on Jack's face.

"I see," she assented, as he paused. "You mean he's ill and will have to hire a substitute; the substitute will have to have his salary; and, in the meantime, his wife and baby will have nothing at all to live upon."

"Exactly." Jack's eyes left Sidney's face and

went to rest on Amy. It was not the first time, by any means, that he had been roused to honest admiration for this keen-witted, outspoken girl. Now, all at once, he determined to throw his plan into her hands and see if she would rise to its defence. "Exactly," he repeated; "and so, to help him on what I can, I'm going to take his run for him, the next week or so, without salary, of course. It's not much; but —"

With a bounce, Amy Pope slid forward to the extreme edge of her chair, where she sat erect.

"Jack! You dear, magnificent old trump!" she burst out breathlessly. "If that is n't just exactly like you!"

Before Jack could make reply, Janet's voice had cut across the silence, low, but with a hard, rasping little note vibrating in it.

"Have you consulted Mr. Argyle about this — this plan of yours?" she asked.

Amy Pope turned upon her sharply.

"What utter nonsense, Janet! Why in the world should he? It's his vacation."

But already Jack was answering.

"I telephoned him, this noon. That was what kept me out so long, waiting to get a clear wire."

"And?" Janet asked crisply.

Jack's laugh was jovial, for, now that his story was out, the fun of the whole adventure came rushing back to him.

"He told me to go ahead, and take his blessing,

while I did it," he made contented answer. "I knew my asking him was bound to be nothing but a mere matter of form; he was sure to approve."

Once more Janet spoke crisply.

"I am glad Mr. Argyle is so broad-minded. However, there are others who may not share his views." And, rising, she rang for Elsie sharply; then she faced about without another word, and left the room.

Out of the silence which followed her going, Mrs. Blanchard spoke.

"My son," she asked, with gentle gravity; "are you sure you've done a wise thing?"

Jack faced her, saw the trouble in her eyes, the anxious pucker in her brow. Crossing the room to seat himself on the arm of her chair, he flung his arm across her shoulders.

"I know I have done the only thing, Mother," he told her, with a quiet decision she could not dispute. "It's not a case for wisdom; it's just simple humanity. The fellow used to be my friend, has done me many and many a good turn, when we were working side by side. Now he is knocked out; the worry about the mere money end of things would only make him worse. And here am I up here on the spot, knowing his run from end to end, and not a thing in the world to do! Really, I could n't help myself."

"Do you mean that he asked it of you?" Mrs. Blanchard inquired a little severely.

Apparently unmoved by his mother's disapproval,

Jack laughed at the suggestion, and his laugh was good to hear.

"Asked me! The fellow nearly had a fit, when I went back and told him I'd clinched all the arrangements, down to borrowing a misfit uniform."

Curiously enough, the mention of the uniform was the final straw in the old lady's burden.

"Jack!" she lamented. "You don't mean you will put on a uniform again?"

"Of course. Why not?" And Jack's arm dropped, while he stared at her in complete surprise, for now and then his nature showed itself too large to take the measure of his mother's petty whims.

As if in despair, she clasped her lace-frilled hands in her black-silk lap, and shook her head.

"You really can't," she said plaintively. "I think I could n't bear it, if you did."

"But why?" he urged her, bending down to pat her cheek.

"Because it — it — it is n't — gentlemanly," she faltered. And then she sought her handkerchief, and, a little later, sought her room.

Jack saw her to the foot of the stairs; then he returned to the waiting group, closed the door and stood at bay.

"Next?" he said, as lightly as he could; but his kind brown eyes were grave and troubled.

Sidney rose and crossed the floor to join him.

"You poor old boy! But don't go and get yourself worried," she besought him. "Things do look

a little snarly, I confess; but come and sit down and take it easy, while we try to straighten them out."

For a moment more, they stood there, he in disturbed anxiety, she tall, lithe and earnest, smiling into his dejected eyes. Then Jack yielded to her smile, threw back his shoulders and crossed the room to take the unoccupied sofa corner at her side.

In the end, the two chief dissenting voices being absent, the talk resolved itself into a discussion of the grounds of their dissent. It was Jack himself who opened the discussion.

"How could I know she'd object?" he queried of the carpet, and the four girls, listening, knew by instinct that his question referred, not to his mother, but to Janet Leslie.

Amy Pope sought to turn the question to a joke.

"Janet always leads the opposition," she said lightly. "She's a born conservative."

But Irene, reading in Jack's eyes that he was in no mood for joking, took another ground of explanation.

"After all, you know, you men are such rash beings that now and then you do put us hostesses into hot water," she chid him. "No one knows what plans Janet may have been making for this next week. You probably have upset them all, and that's the reason your own pet scheme has called down her wrath."

Irene spoke guardedly, yet with the hope that Jack



might accept her explanation as the true one, and the trouble yet blow over. Sidney, however, knew both Jack and Janet far better than Irene did. Knowing them both, she felt that the only safe course lay in speaking out directly. Evasions would only lead to further and more complex misunderstandings. None the less, it would be hard to speak out and run the risk of hurting Jack. Still, it must be done. She turned to face him bravely.

"There is no especial use in beating about the bush, Jack," she said quietly. "Whatever we may say, we know it's Janet's social nerves that are on edge."

He nodded gravely.

"I know. In a way, my mother feels it, too."

"Yes. She showed she did. She belongs to an older generation, when such things counted more. As for Janet, she's a Canadian, and —"

"So am I," he interrupted.

"Yes; but you're a man, and don't stop to fuss about such pernicky little trifles." It was Paul now who was blazing away from his corner, quite regardless of the fact that, once on a time, he too had fussed.

Slowly, regretfully Sidney shook her head.

"It's not altogether pernicky, Paul. And besides, it's only fair to see Janet's side, especially now that she is n't here to show it off, herself. Janet is as fond of Jack as any of us are —"

"Doubted!" Amy Browne put in hastily, and

Jack forgot his trouble long enough to fling her an answering smile.

"Yes, Janet is really loyal to Jack; loyal, that is, as she counts loyalty," Sidney corrected hastily, in deference to the dissenting murmur that arose around her. "Still, we must remember that she's been brought up inside some strict traditions. What did you say, Paul?"

"Time she kicked them over and climbed out," he growled. Then, coming out of his corner, he faced them, frowning and his fists in his side pockets. "Oh, go to thunder, Tids! You take too long. Now look here, you fellows," he said swiftly; "you listen to man-talk. I agree with Tids; but she takes too many words to say her piece. Janet is a snob, born so, trained so. She's not to blame; but she's a beastly little snob, all same. I like Janet; as long as I could, I fought for her. Now I'll be hanged, chivalry or no chivalry, if I'll fight for any girl that lies. As for Blanchard, he is victim of a plot that circumstances have hatched up. Being the fellow he is, he could n't help taking the place of an old friend who was knocked out. I'd have despised him, if he had. So far, we all agree. But the rock Janet split on, the rock we every mother's son of us are shying at now is this: as a rule, we don't chum around with fellows that run on trains. Jack is an exception, and there's enough of him, himself, to make the exception count. As long as he's Jack Blanchard, we can't get on without him, whether he

stokes, or grinds the handle of a brake." He paused for breath. Then, blushing furiously, he swung around to Jack. "I say, old man," he added; "I hope you won't think I'm quite a brute. The thing has been inside us, all along, inside you, too, and I thought it was about time we had it out and done with."

So downright had been Paul's manner, so kindly and so free from any hint of apology that Jack's steady eyes never wavered, and now they looked back at him without a trace of hurt. Before Jack could speak, however, Amy Pope had bounced to her feet and seized Paul's hand.

"Good for you, Paul! You've said it out at last. Moreover, for my part, I can say that, as long as he stays Jack Blanchard and my friend, he's welcome to chop wood, or grind a hand organ." And, turning, she held out her other hand to Jack. "Jack," she said impulsively; "I think you're splendid, and I'm glad you've done it."

And Jack, looking at his two champions, the sturdy, honest boy, the enthusiastic young girl in her dainty frills and furbelows, felt that the uncomfortable discussion had been well worth the while, if only for the sake of proving that he possessed such friends. And, curiously enough, it was those same two friends who, weeks before, had plotted how, in quite another sense, they might make the pampered hero aware of their existence. Their foresight had been as short as now was their memory.

"And yet," Irene said to Sidney, when they went to their rooms to dress for dinner; "I can't help wishing he had n't had to do it. Of course, he could n't well avoid it, being Jack. Still, it is bound to make all the difference in the world, up here. Not for us. I don't care if it does. But for him. People here, who are only just getting to know him, won't take the trouble to find out what sort of a man he really is. They will just see his shiny buttons and his cap, and stop there. In a way, too, it will make it hard for Janet — And yet," she broke off illogically, as they halted outside of Sidney's door; "I can't help being rather glad he's done it."

When Janet came down to dinner, her cheeks were blazing with excitement. As if in justification of her own strictures, to emphasize her right to act as social censor, she had dressed herself elaborately, and piled her hair in intricate coils on top of her head. She looked older than usual, and very brilliant, and her poise was perfect, as she quietly assumed direction of the talk. The poise did not fail her, even on the one occasion when she led the talk away from the impersonalities to which she had been holding it.

"By the way, Jack," she asked, with apparent carelessness, as she served the pudding; "I never thought to ask you before. Did you have a pleasant call on Mrs. Bertie?"

"I did n't go," he answered quietly.

Janet lifted her brows.

"Not go? How did that happen?" she inquired,

and Mrs. Bertie herself might have been glad to copy the little accent of tolerant surprise.

"I saw no need."

"She asked you."

"Yes. She asked me as reward of merit, because I happened to save her from a spill exactly under the nose of the Prince. Otherwise, she never would have been aware of my existence. For myself, I don't care to accept an invitation of that sort."

"Really?" Janet laid down the spoon. "I'm very sorry. I like to have my guests know only the nicest sort of people, especially in my own city."

Then it was that Paul cast back at Janet's feet the allegiance which he had been holding for her.

"The only question is, which are the nicest," he observed. Then, scarlet at the intentional rudeness of his own voice and manner, he brusquely pushed his chair back from the table. "Hang it all, Blanchard, come along and have a walk!" he added gruffly. "Excuse us, Janet." And, an instant later, the street door banged behind him.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

“**L**ET the fellow try it for a while,” Mr. Argyle wrote to his wife at Massawippi. “It was honourable of him to wait to get my permission; and I confess that I rather liked his doing it. It won’t hurt him a bit in the eyes of any sensible being; and, once for all, it will settle any question of his getting spoiled and soft. Don’t tell Rob and Day yet. Best leave him to give them his reasons, himself; but be sure you remember to tell me just how they take it. Jack’s every inch a man; this new departure of his may be a shock to their feelings, but it’s bound to be a fine lesson to them both. It takes the best sort of a judge to forget the frame, when he is looking at a picture.”

And Mrs. Argyle, reading, held her peace, and then burned the letter. She agreed with her husband completely. It was best to wait and leave Jack to tell the story for himself.

Janet came down to breakfast, the next morning, robed in a brand-new mantle of superiority, uncreased, untorn at any point. From her smile, an outsider would never have imagined that the house held cause for friction; her level voice had just the proper degree of courteous interest, as she met the others and asked the usual polite questions about

their health, that morning, their rest, the night before. In a swift aside, Amy Pope expressed to Paul a malign wish to test Janet's calmness with the point of a hat pin; however, beside the manifest and pink-nosed depression of Mrs. Blanchard, even Janet's superiority was a relief, and the others, as they seated themselves at table, returned thanks that no fresh scene was likely to occur immediately.

Contrary to her usual custom of late, Janet's talk disregarded Paul completely, and focussed itself upon Amy Browne whom she had been wont to disdain as a vain and fluffy worldling, brainless and to be tolerated only on account of Day. Like too many girls who are launched into the thick of college life before they have had a chance to absorb its best traditions, Janet was a bit of a Pharisee just then. Apart from her Quebec friends who, by reason of their nationality, were exempt from criticism, Janet was inclining to sort out minds according to their training in dead languages or calculus. Amy Browne's knowledge of the world, her year or two in a Dresden school, her fluent mastery of Spanish and Italian counted for little in the eyes of Janet. She ranked these things as mental frills, and put them side by side with the Paris frocks, as needless and unproductive luxuries. The last lesson that Janet Leslie would ever learn was the one which concerns the duty of graciousness of living, a duty which can be fulfilled in any home, however simple.

Now, though, above the coffee cups, she turned to Amy with effusion.

"By the way," she said; "Gladys telephoned to me, late last night, about this afternoon. She wants all of us girls to come down there, directly after luncheon. She has some plan on foot; but I don't know what it is. Anyway, if she plans it, it is sure to be worth doing, so I accepted promptly for us all."

Amy Pope looked up from her plate.

"I'm sorry, Janet; that is, if it includes me, for I can't go."

"Why not? There's nothing else on hand; is there?"

"Paul and I are going across to see Jack off."

"Jack?" Janet echoed, in polite surprise; but she did not turn her glance in that direction.

"Yes. He begins his work, to-day," Amy answered for him.

"Really? I am sorry." Janet's sorrow expressed itself in unruffled calm. "We shall miss you, Jack. Still, I suppose we shall see you back again, before the party breaks up entirely."

"He will be here, you know, over two nights, each week," Irene reminded her.

The pause grew long. Everybody else was waiting for Janet to speak; but she merely consumed her breakfast with an air of complete detachment. At last, just as the nerves of the other girls were ready to give way, Jack broke the silence.

"All in all," he said, with a quietness which failed



to match the hurt look in his eyes; "I think it may be better for me to take a room at the Saint Louis. My hours will be irregular, the next week or so; and there's no especial sense in my stirring up all your plans. This other way will be better."

Janet glanced up from her plate. She spoke carelessly.

"I'm sorry," she repeated. "We shall miss you of course. Still, as you say, it really may be better for you not to be tied down to our regular hours for things." Then airily she dismissed the subject. "Amy, can't you really go to Gladys? I am afraid she won't take it nicely, if you don't."

Amy faced her, hostility written on every line of her face.

"Then she can take it badly. Not all the Gladyses in creation can keep me from going across with Jack. Paul and I have been counting on it, all night long."

They did go across with Jack. When he came downstairs in his uniform and with his suitcase in his hand, he found them waiting in the hall, to all seeming as jolly and as irresponsible as if the three of them had been starting for a picnic. Moreover, they allowed no break to come in their mood, no break in the conversation, while they went down through the city streets, crossed the ferry and waited beside the train where Jack, after his old fashion, took his stand at attention beside the sleeper steps. And Jack, heavy-hearted by reason of his parting from his mother whose disapproval had been fretful

and aggrieved, by reason, too, of Janet's attitude which had hurt him far more than he would have felt it manly to confess, even to himself, Jack was well aware that their presence tided over for him what otherwise would have been a dreary half-hour. Once his work absorbed him, regrets would cease, although even now the regrets were not at all for the coming work, but for the antagonism he had left behind him. This little time of waiting, though, would have been a forlorn one, had it not been for these two loyal friends who were standing by him, to fill up all the gaps left by his old familiar routine. Passengers were few, that day. What few there were, however, lingered for a moment on the platform, while they wondered what could be the possible connection between the stalwart young conductor and the well-groomed, well-bred boy and girl, so obviously of the world's elect. Asked, however, the boy and girl would not have found it hard to tell them.

The train conductor gave the signal, the porter took away the step, and the train slid up the grade, carrying Jack with it. He lingered on the platform to look back at them, smiling slightly, and a world of gratitude shining in his steady, friendly eyes.

"But what I want to know," Paul said slowly, as, at Amy's side, he turned away; "what I want to know is this: where's Tids?"

"I do know." Amy spoke with deliberation.

"Where?"

"At Gladys Horth's."

"Yes, I know that," Paul said impatiently. "But why on earth is n't she here? I thought better of Tids than all that."

"Keep on thinking better of her, then," Amy bade him fearlessly. "She deserves every bit of it and more. I happen to know that she was coming with us, only Jack begged her not to, this very morning."

"Hm!" Paul's grunt was expressive. "Why not?"

"I heard him saying to her that it would only just make matters worse all round. Then I removed myself promptly. From the way he was looking at her, I thought I'd best leave them all alone."

Paul shook his head in supreme disdain.

"Tids is n't that sort. Neither is he," he said, in two crisp sentences.

"Perhaps not. Still, I did n't stop to see."

Paul went off on a fresh tack.

"Why do you suppose he did n't go for us about it, too?"

The thoughtfulness left Amy's face, and her laugh was saucy.

"Because he probably had the sense to know it would n't do the slightest bit of good. Have n't you learned by this time, Paul, that there are seasons when it is a distinct advantage to be considered unreasonable?"

Whatever Paul had learned from his experience, Sidney, that noon, had discovered to her full dissatisfaction that it was no advantage to be considered

open to reason. Jack had reasoned with her at great length, that morning. Sidney had rebelled, then yielded to his logic. Indeed, she would have yielded, just then, to almost any request Jack made, so pitiful was she for the hurt look in his eyes, his brave attempt to act as if nothing were amiss. Nevertheless, it had been a hard experience for the girl, this going off with Janet and abandoning her loyal friend just at the time when he seemed to need her most. However, Jack would consent to no other course.

"Sidney," he had said to her gravely, as he met her on the stairs, soon after breakfast; "I have a favour to ask of you."

She tried to break his gravity.

"What is it?" she inquired. "I know, from the look of you, it is something that's sure to go against the grain."

"It is. I want you to promise me you'll go to Gladys Horth's, this afternoon."

"I won't," she said flatly. Then she dropped down upon the stairs, prepared to defend her position.

Deliberately he seated himself at her feet, then turned to face her, while a little spark of pleasure came into his heavy eyes, belying the persuasiveness of his smile.

"I wish you would," he urged. "There's every reason for it; but I'm asking it just as a personal favour to myself."

Sidney rested her elbows on her knees; then she put her chin on her tight-shut fists.

"Jack, it's not of the slightest use to wheedle me like that," she told him quietly. "I would do almost anything else for you; but not that. It would be like siding with Janet, and I don't. I argued for her, last night, all I could, because there wasn't another person there to say a single word for her; but the fact is, I am mad, mad all down my spine. *Angry* does n't half express it. Jack," she unclined her right fist for an instant, while she touched his hand, lying along the stair above him. Then she resumed her old position; "the more I think about it, I think you're very splendid in this thing."

"I'm glad, Sidney," he said simply. "I could n't do much else, though."

"Perhaps. Perhaps not. Anyway, I intend to go to see you off and publicly bestow my blessing on you," she declared, with a swift suppression of her momentary emotion. "It's the least thing I can do, to show just where I stand in this matter."

Jack put his foot on the stair where he was sitting sidewise, clasped his hands about his bent knee, and fell to considering the opposite wall. Sidney, above, considered him intently. The years of prosperity had trained him in a certain sort of social ease; but, after all, he was very much the same old Jack who, years before, had looked out for herself and Bungay, and carried Rob safely through one bitter day and night of storm. Moreover, too, Sidney felt sure that, whatever came, he would always remain the

same old Jack, steady, reliable and loyal to the very death.

"Confound it all, Sidney!" Jack broke out at length. "I can't argue; I'm no lawyer. But see here. Anybody that knows the two of us, knows, I hope," his glance sought hers for a moment, and then fell away; "that, in a thing like this, we are bound to stick together. We always have seen things more or less alike. People who really know us, know that. The others don't count, so there's no especial use in trotting out the fact for dress parade. I had no notion that I was going to bring this hornet's nest around my ears; I thought Janet had better sense, and I supposed she stood my friend. However," again his eyes sought hers, and, this time, they held a gleam of fun; "I rather think I should have gone ahead with it, just the same."

She caught swiftly at the sign that his mood was lightening.

"You always were obstinate," she reminded him.

"Perhaps. Perhaps we get it in the army; perhaps it is in the Blanchard blood," he told her whimsically. Then once again he grew grave. "Sidney, I'm older than the rest of you, old enough to hate fusses of any sort. I have n't had so very many in my life. I am sorry to have been the reason for this one. We came up here to be together as chums; it would be a bad, bad thing for the party to break up in a row. It might even last for always, and it's a pity to run the risk of getting to be bad friends."

"I know that, Jack." Sidney's voice, filling the pause he left, was now as grave as his own. "Still, there are some things that are enough to break any friendship."

"Not this," he told her quickly. "Some day, we all shall be laughing at the whole affair. Only — it will be a good deal better to laugh together than apart. That's the reason I am begging you to do all you can to hold things together here; at least, until the Argyles come back."

"Why me?" she asked him quietly.

"Because," he rose and stood facing her, looking down at her with level, kindly eyes which were full of friendship for her, of trust in her friendship for him; "because there is n't anybody else who can see all sides of the question, and knows so well how to keep the whole situation from going to everlasting smash. Will you do it?"

"But —"

"For my sake," he urged her.

And then Sidney gave in and yielded to his will. She did not go to see him off from Levis. She did go to Gladys Horth.

In the days that followed, Sidney had all she could do to hold the little party from entire disruption. Without the support of Jack's steady, sturdy personality, Rob's fun, and Day's gay tact, it seemed again and again that the task would be beyond her strength. The cause of war removed with Jack's departure, there was no more open outbreak; but

the relations were strained wellnigh to the point of breaking. Irene and Amy Browne, at Sidney's expressed request, maintained an armed neutrality. Amy Pope's hostility, however, was quite unsuppressible, while Paul announced, a dozen times a day, that he would start for home, next noon. Janet, meanwhile, was apparently unconscious of any sense of strain. She went her accustomed way among the girls, with Gladys Horth. The only alteration in her manner lay in her unbroken attitude of superiority, and in an increased deference towards Mrs. Blanchard, whether to show sympathy in their common disappointment in Jack's social evolution, or to atone for her recent bitterness towards Jack, it was not altogether easy to determine.

And yet, unchanged as Janet seemed to any casual observer, Irene Jessup, looking deeper and more closely, thought she could make out a difference in the girl's appearance and manner. She was more nervous and excitable than she had been, earlier in the summer, less reticent in small details, more given to breaking pauses in the talk with careless, eager chatter. Her face was more animated now, more brilliant; but her eyes, instead of lighting now and then, glittered like winter stars, and beneath them, morning after morning, there lay dark lines of shadow. For three or four days, Irene watched Janet and held her peace. On the fifth afternoon, tea over, she went in search of Sidney.



"Sidney," she said, without preface; "I'm worried over Janet."

Sidney shook out her dinner frock, tossed it on the bed, then unbuttoned her blouse.

"So am I," she agreed tranquilly.

"But I don't mean her temper; I mean her health," Irene persisted.

Sidney laughed.

"I don't see signs of dissolution," she replied a little callously.

Irene crossed the room, put her two brown hands on Sidney's bare shoulders and looked straight into her eyes.

"Don't let your loyalty to Jack make you too bitter against Janet, Sidney," she urged her friend. "He would n't like to have it; it's not like you to be so hard. I've been watching Janet edgewise lately. The child is n't at all well, nor like herself."

Sidney bent her head to rub her cheek on Irene's arm, token that the rebuke, deserved, had been taken in all good part. Then, —

"Conscience, most likely," she made laconic answer.

"It probably helps on the situation. Still, I imagine the cause is the other way about. Now see here, Sidney: I stayed outside the pageants and looked on. They were magnificent to watch; but they must have been a fearful nervous strain to go through. Even before he went away, Wade was predicting they'd be the cause of more than one

family jar. Everybody was tired out and a little cornerwise as to his temper. You none of you — nor I — escaped the general epidemic. And, as for Janet, remember that she took it all on top of the care of this great house, of the extra work she had when Mary Browne was ill — ”

“ We all helped,” Sidney reminded her.

“ After a fashion, yes. Still, in the end, it all came back on her. And then there was Lady Wadhams.”

“ And the poodle,” Sidney added, and both girls laughed. “ Well ? ” Sidney asked, after a pause.

“ This,” Irene answered ; “ that Janet was off her nerve and cross ; that she knows she lost her temper and acted like a — dunce, and now it only makes her worse. There ’s a perverse little streak in Janet Leslie that makes it almost impossible for her to admit it, when she ’s in the wrong.”

Sidney considered the matter for a time.

“ You think ? ” she inquired slowly then.

“ That, in her heart of hearts, Janet would give anything in the world to be friends again with Jack.”

“ She can, if she wants to. Why does n’t she write him a note and tell him so ? ”

Irene shook her head.

“ That is n’t Janet,” she said despairingly. “ Once she makes her bed, she ’ll lie in it, wrinkles and all, till it breaks down under her and lets her tumble out on the floor.”

"Then what's to be done about it all?" Sidney asked impatiently.

And Irene answered, —

"Wait till it does break down; that's all."

Meanwhile, in the library downstairs, Janet still lingered by the tray, sorting over the spoons and casting furtive glances, the while, at the boy lounging in the farther window-seat.

"Just one more cup, Paul?" she urged him.

"Thanks, no," he answered a little curtly.

"What's the matter with you?" she asked him, with forced gayety. "You seem dejected."

His reply was blunt.

"Worse than that, I'm bored."

Her own depression was too great to allow her to resent the slander to her hospitality.

"I am sorry," she said slowly. "Can I do anything to prevent it, Paul?"

Again his bluntness downed his manners.

"Send for Blanchard to come back, and beg his pardon," he said shortly. "That is about the only thing that will set things right, I fancy."

Janet paled, started to speak. Then her colour came, and she raised her head proudly.

"Paul!" Amy Pope's gay voice from the threshold came like a cry of rescue to the shipwrecked mariner, swimming beyond his depth in an angry sea. "What in the world have you been doing now? Here's a minion of the law in the hall, with a letter addressed to you. Do come, quick! I foresee events."

With the shortest possible nod to Janet, still seated by the tray, Paul crossed the floor and vanished in the direction of the hall. He found there, obviously awaiting him, a fat little French policeman who held in his hand a letter with Paul's name on the outside.

Glancing askance at Amy, Paul nodded to the man and took the letter, square, thin, and bearing *O. H. M. S.* along its upper margin. He broke the seal, read the few words it contained, and then burst into a roar of laughter that wellnigh shook the pictures from the walls.

"Here, catch!" He tossed the note to Amy. "This is yours, as much as it is for me."

Amy caught the note and glanced at it. Her laugh echoed Paul's own, as she read the brief missive, —

"P. ADDISON,

"SIR, —

"The infant child that you aforetime stole, it now is at your disposal, so long as you still so desire.

"JEAN TREMBLAY: *Capt. of Police.*"

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

“**I** THINK perhaps,” Paul said guardedly to Amy Pope, next morning; “that we’d best stop at the Saint Louis to annex Blanchard, and take him along with us as interpreter.”

Amy nodded.

“If he’ll go. He may be tired, or have something else to do.”

“He’ll go, all right. He’s always pining for chances to be useful. Besides, he has a sneaking fondness for our society, in spite of himself.” Paul chuckled. “What’s more, we’ll trot him round past the Horths’, parade him under Gladys’ windows.”

“What’s the use? He won’t have on his uniform.”

“No matter. He’s it, just the same. How long before you can be ready for a start?”

Nothing could have been more eloquent, as a comment upon the disruption of the Leslie household, than the fact that Paul and Amy had not seen fit to acquaint the others with the subject of Paul’s letter of the night before. Paul had dismissed the man with a nod, a curt “All right. I’ll see him in the morning,” and the man had gone his way before the others had even been aware of his arrival. Then, —

“I say, this is mighty strange,” Paul had observed to Amy.

"Rather. What do you suppose it means?"

"Blest if I know! Don't you?"

"How should I?"

Paul chuckled.

"You were in it, too."

"But how did they get your name?"

Paul's chuckle grew.

"On the police court records, of course."

Amy recoiled from the idea.

"Paul! Not really? That would be terrible."

"Most likely yours is there with it," Paul reminded her unkindly.

"You're not in earnest?" she protested.

"Sure! That's what comes of being took for petty larceny." But, by this time, his laugh betrayed him, and Amy's face resumed its normal look of supreme content.

"But, Paul!" She had started to go upstairs; but she paused, as a new thought struck her. "Do you suppose it is the same baby? It may be just a plot to work off a child on us. I never could be sure it was the same."

"I could, though," Paul asserted confidently; "I'd know him by his barking, every time. Still, what's the difference? You don't propose to adopt him; do you?"

"No!" Amy made hasty answer. "Never! But —"

Once more she turned away to mount the stairs. Once more she halted.

"Shall we tell the others, Paul?"

"Not till we have something to tell. Like Blanchard, I'm getting to fight shy of discussions. Later on, we can do as we like. Now, though, we'd best hold our peaces till we discover what comes of it all."

"What could come?" Amy questioned.

And Paul answered in a hollow tone, —

"The baby."

Then he went his way, giving opportunity for no more plotting or discussion until, dinner done, he and Amy departed for the terrace.

Next morning, directly after breakfast, they left the house once more. They vouchsafed no explanation of their coming absence; but Sidney straightway connected their going with the thought of Jack, and yearned acutely to be with them. She was not jealous in the least of Amy's place with either boy. Down in her heart of hearts, she knew that the careless, conscienceless, warm-hearted Amy was no match for herself in the estimation of either one; yet that, in the present crisis, her happy-go-lucky hilarity rendered her a good comrade for both the boys. Still, it would have been very good to have been included in their quartette, wherever it was going. If Rob had only been there, he would have taken her out, as Paul was doing Amy, to meet Jack upon neutral ground. Without him — it all was different. Sidney's gray eyes clouded. Without Rob, things were always different, anyway. And a letter from him,

in that morning's mail, had said that it might be a full week more before he and Day returned.

By common consent of the four girls and Paul, it had been agreed that their letters to the Argyles should hold no mention of Jack's absence, none of the season of storm that lay upon the house. At that distance, neither Rob nor Day could do anything to alleviate the situation. There was no need to spoil their visit, all for nothing. Besides, it would be hard to say anything at all without saying far too much. Best wait till they returned, unless, as was very likely, Jack wrote them all the tale, himself. And so the days must drag along, each one less comfortable than the last had been, until Day and Rob were back again, to put some end or other to the whole ugly situation. For, as the hours crept slowly past her, wearing her patience and her nerves to shreds, Sidney almost ceased to care what the end would be, so long as the Argyles, she and Jack could only run away back to dear old American New York. For the time being, Janet's shadow was hanging over her so near and imminent as to blot out the rest of Canada, its traditions and its point of view.

As Paul had foreseen, Jack flung himself into their plan with characteristic energy, and, barely waiting to snatch up a cap, he joined them in the street where Amy, pacing to and fro, looked up to hail his coming.

"All right?" she asked him gayly.

"Right as can be."



"Where are your shiny buttons?"

"Upstairs. Do you expect me to wear them, when I'm off duty?"

She nodded.

"They make you look very grand and official, they and the stiff cap. I can almost imagine you're in your old uniform again."

"So I am."

"No; I don't mean that. I imagine this one is better groomed; but I was talking about the khaki one. Still, I suppose this is more becoming to your colour. What do you think we're after now?"

He laughed.

"Paul told me. Have you any idea what it all may mean?"

"Not a bit. That's what we're after now, to find out. It may be some dire plot to inflict belated justice. That's why I wanted you to be in uniform." Her laugh was full of gay mockery. "What do you advise us to do?"

"Just what you are doing: go down to Saint Sauveur and find out what they want. Will you walk, or take the car?"

Amy considered, her head on one side.

"When I was a little girl and had a plummy bun," she said at length; "I used to eat it in little teeny bites, to make it last a long, long time. I think — inasmuch as we've got you to go with us — I'd rather walk."

And notwithstanding the lazy mockery of her tone Jack reddened with pleasure at her words.

Side by side, then, that sunny August morning, the three friends tramped away together, around the Ramparts, along Rue Richelieu, down the rambling old Côte d'Abraham, bordered on either hand with sharp-nosed houses and shabby shops, and then, turning northwest, on into Saint Sauveur. So elated were they with the crispy morning air around them, with the sharp lights and shadows of the streets and of the distant hills, most of all with the pleasure of once more setting out together in their old, familiar fashion which already had come to seem a part of a remote past: so intent were they on all these things that they quite forgot the main purpose of their errand, and they looked up in surprise when Jack brought them to a halt outside a police station in Saint Sauveur.

"Hanged if I didn't forget all about what we were after!" Paul said a little ruefully, as they prepared to enter the official-looking door. Then, hat in hand, he dodged aside. "Pardon me; ladies first," he said to Amy.

But Jack, albeit laughing, held her back.

"I think I'd best go in ahead," he told her. "Nobody knows what it is they may be after, and you surely will need my French, once you do get inside. No; it's bound to be all right, Amy." He smiled in answer to her dubious glance. "Else, you know, I never would have let you come down here

with us." And, as so many others had done before her, she cast aside her uneasiness, relying completely on his eyes and smile.

Moreover, it was just as Jack had told them. They assuredly did not know the purpose of the letter; just as assuredly they did have sore need of his French. Inside the station, the colloquy was long and animated; yet not one word did Paul or Amy understand, save now and then a vehement negative from Jack. When at last there came a silence and Jack turned to face them, pity, amusement, consternation were written on his honest brow.

"Had it ever occurred to either of you," he asked; "to care about adopting a lusty baby boy of thirteen months?"

"What!" Paul shot off the exclamation like a bomb.

"Exactly," Jack made composed reply. "That is what I told the officer on duty."

"But what cheek! What blasted cheek! What does he think I'd do with a baby, anyhow?"

"I also asked him that. He assured me that he did n't know; but that, a few weeks ago, monsieur appeared to covet the baby for his own."

Paul turned on Amy, after the fashion of mankind from Father Adam down.

"You did it," he reminded her. "'T was you who suggested making off with it, in the first place."

"I?" The single syllable nearly cracked with the amount of scorn compressed into it. Then Amy

turned her back on Paul. "But, Jack, what makes them so willing to give away the child?" she asked.

"Apparently because there's nothing else to do with him."

"Where's the grandfather?"

"Dead, of typhoid."

Amy's face changed, in swift pity for the little waif.

"Has n't he any other relations?"

"Only an aunt-in-law who kept the house. And it seems she also died of typhoid, a day or so ago."

"Dreadful! What will become of the baby?"

Jack shook his head.

"That is the question this man apparently expects you to answer. I can't seem to get out of his head the notion that you and Paul really did have some sort of designs upon the infant. He keeps sticking to it that now your time has come."

But, for once in her life, Amy Pope refused to see the humour of a situation. Instead, —

"Where is the baby now?" she demanded.

"A neighbour took him for a day or two; but —"

She interrupted.

"Paul, lend me some money, please. I have only sixty-three cents to my name."

"Millions for defence! Still, he's a presentation copy. There's no especial sense in offering to buy him."

"I'm not going to buy the child," Amy protested.

"I just want to hunt up the neighbour and give it

to it for it. It's pitiful: first its mother, then its grandfather, then its aunt."

"In-law," Paul supplemented, as he handed her his purse. "There's my little all, Amy. Take it with my blessing; spend it freely, yet without extravagance." Then his jolly face grew grave. "After all, though, it is hard lines on the little chap. I don't see what is going to become of him."

"I do," Amy said promptly. "Where is the neighbour, Jack? Do you suppose we could find the place and take a look at the baby, to make sure it's all right?"

Jack laughed a little.

"I was about to say, when you cut in," he told her; "that, last night, the neighbour landed here, baby and all, and told the officer on duty that she could n't keep him, another minute."

"Why not, the horrid thing?" Amy demanded.

Again Jack's eyes grew merry.

"Force of character," he answered. "The little chap appeared not to fancy her, and was n't backward about expressing his views."

"Most likely she spanked him," Amy made vindictive retort. "Where is he now, Jack?"

"They let him stop on here, until they heard from you."

"Jack! In a police office! That baby! Have them get him, quick!"

"Oh, I say!" Paul objected.

"Quick!" Amy repeated.

Once more Jack faced the officer. There was a hasty, energetic colloquy in French; and then an attendant left the room and vanished down the hall. A little later, sounds were heard from afar, angry sounds and strident withal, and increasing in volume as they came nearer. Paul listened, lifted his head, listened again intently.

"He's it," he said. "I'd know him by his bay. I'd swear to that larynx in a dozen."

A moment later, the attendant came back to the office, bearing on his shoulder the shrieking child, blue-satin coated no longer, but clad in dingy flannel, its face thin and of a chalky white. As Paul's eyes rested on the child, the laugh went out of their gray depths and in its place there came a great, boyish tenderness and pity.

"Poor — little — chap!" he said slowly. "He's all gone to pieces, and I'd hardly know him."

Something in the slow, deliberate accent caught the attention of the shrieking baby. He gulped back an unfinished roar and turned his head to look. Close beside him was a face he liked, a stranger face, yet friendly, with a look in its gray eyes he had encountered but too rarely in his baby life. He looked again, gulped back the beginnings of another roar; and then, before the group around him could guess at his intention, he had stretched out to Paul his meagre, grimy little fists.

"Well — by — Jove!" As if in spite of himself, Paul's hands went out in answer. "I'll be

hanged, Amy, if the little chap does n't remember me."

But Amy only nodded, too much absorbed in the practical issues of the case to heed the purely sentimental. Leaving Paul to beam benevolently at the smudgy fingers clasped about his thumb, she faced back again to Jack.

"Really, what will become of the child?" she asked.

"Really, Amy, I don't know."

"Has n't he any people that belong to him? Not anywhere?"

"They can't get on the track of any."

"And the neighbour would n't keep him?"

"She said not."

"Awful! Just a poor little human white elephant! Jack, do you suppose they'll keep him here, if we give them money to pay for things?"

"Not likely. A police station is n't a day nursery."

"I say, look here, you two!" Paul broke in, as he sawed his thumb, clasping fingers and all, up and down through the air. "Just see the way he hangs on. A fellow can't help rather taking to the little beggar."

"Where can he go, then?" Amy asked desperately.

"I suppose there must be asylums, or something of that sort," Jack was beginning vaguely; but Amy interrupted him.

"Yes, and be a pink-calico child, with a number and not an ounce of personality!"

"But, if it's the best we can do for the little chap?" Jack urged.

Into Amy Pope's eyes flashed the light of a new idea, magnificent and daring, magnificent because it was so daring.

"Jack," she said abruptly, as she straightened up her shoulders and looked into his eyes with eyes which were not so far below his own; "I'd like to go at this thing delicately and by degrees; but unfortunately there isn't time. I'm going to wait a little bit, before we stick this child into an asylum. Maybe we can find a better home for him, if we have a few days to look around us. In the meantime, just for a few days, a very, very few, do you suppose your mother —"

Jack hesitated. Then, —

"I — well — er — yes, perhaps," he assented vaguely. And then, a moment later, "But what about Janet?" he queried, with a smile which held no hint of mirth.

Amy shrugged her shoulders.

"'Let the heathen rage,'" she answered. "I'm not afraid of Janet. Paul, if you can detach yourself for a single instant, will you please run over to the cab-stand on the corner, and get a carter?"

Thus did Amy take the helm.

To the surprise of all the three, the baby manifested a calm pleasure in the long drive to Upper Town. Jack left them at the Saint Louis. Much as he regretted the loss of seeing his mother's face



at sight of her new charge, he felt it best, all things considered, not to drive on with them to the Leslie door. Besides, it was now high noon, and time that he once more donned his uniform. Had he decided otherwise, he not only would have looked on at a meeting which held its own share of humour, but he would have learned that Rob, in a letter received, that morning, had announced a change of plan whereby Day and he were to arrive in Quebec, two days later. And Paul and Amy, too much absorbed in the varied welcomes accorded to their charge to think of other things, neglected until too late to telephone down to the Saint Louis the exciting news.

It was a full week now since Jack had started upon his self-sought task; and, in all that week, not one word had come to him from Rob and Day. Jack had watched eagerly the coming of the mails, sure that these two best friends of his would write to him as soon as they heard from their father of his new plan. At the first, he had longed acutely for their letters, sure that they would give him their full sympathy. Then, as two days and then three went past him and no message came, he was conscious of a little ache in what it was conventional to call his heart. Did they also disapprove? It would be hardest of all to stand out against their opinion, after being so very sure that they would take their stand upon his side. And worse than their disapproval was their utter silence. Of course, it would have been easy for him to write to them

and tell them all the story; but an unwonted shyness, a self-distrust born of Janet's strictures, held him back. Besides, it rarely was wise to set things down in ink. Best wait, and talk it over with them, face to face. Only — the time of waiting seemed unduly long.

It was a raw and rainy dawn, two mornings later, when Rob and Day boarded the north-bound train. The porter showed them to their section, for the conductor was having his allotted four-hour sleep, and it was not until a good hour afterward that the curtains of his section stirred. A little later still, he made his appearance in the car where Rob and Day sat facing him. Unconcernedly enough, he came striding along the narrow passage past the smoking-room, paused to ask a question of the porter, then came striding on again. Just inside the doorway of the main division of the car, he halted, his shoulders thrown back, his chin lifted, his eyes and lips both smiling a little, as his gaze wandered down the car before him. It was an old, old trick of his, that characteristic pose of kindly interest in the people entrusted to his care, a pose so well remembered by one at least among his morning's passengers.

And the passenger, seeing, remembering, sprang to his feet alertly, dragging his companion with him.

"Day! Day!" he burst out excitedly. "Hanged if it is n't Jack!"

And, with Day close at his heels, he dashed down the car, his hand stretched out in eager welcome.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

WITH Rob sitting opposite, and Day curled up by his side, Jack told them all his story; all, that is, which he knew: told of his plan, of the opposition which it had created, of Janet's acquiescence when he had proposed to leave the house. Bit by bit, it all came out; not willingly, but in response to Rob's incisive questions. Bit by bit, as they listened, Rob's jovial face grew dark, and Day's clear eyes grew overcast and sad.

"Poor old Jack!" she interrupted once. "It could n't have been much worse. And to think we never knew!"

He smiled at her for a moment, without speaking. Her girlish sympathy touched him to the quick, touched him the more in comparison with those long days when he had vainly waited for a message from her.

"You did n't know, Day?" he asked her.

She shook her head.

"Do you suppose wild horses would have kept us down there, if we had?" she demanded. "But go on."

And Jack went on to the very end, while Rob asked the questions and Day listened. Over the final chapters of his story, his steady eyes drooped a little, and

the others heard him out in utter silence. When he had finished, Day gave a long sigh. A moment later, she moved a bit closer to his side, while her hand stole across his arm. His breath held short, he awaited her verdict. It was prompt in coming.

"From start to finish, you have done the only thing possible, Jack," she told him. "But, to my dying day, I shall regret I was n't here to fight on your side."

"It's not too late yet," Rob reminded her grimly.

But Jack interposed, and begged for peace. Too bad to turn a skirmish into open war. Now he was out of the way, Janet would calm down again and be friends. He really was very comfortable at the Saint Louis. Now Rob and Day were within reach once more, nothing else counted very much, after all.

"But," he rose, as he spoke, for the train was slowing up for Sherbrooke, rose and stood smiling down at them in his old way; "I do want you to know one thing: Paul and Amy Pope have stuck to me like a pair of burrs. A fellow could n't have more plucky champions to fight for him. They were on my side from the start, right or wrong; and they were n't always too tactful in suppressing their opinions, either." Then, for the porter was waiting, he left them alone.

"Rob," Day spoke a little sadly; "did you suppose Janet had it in her?"

And Rob's answer came as gravely, —

"No, Day; I did n't."

There was a pause. Day spoke again.

"Poor dear old Jack!" she said. "This has taken it out of him badly. He won't admit he is hurt; but the snap is all gone out of him."

None the less, she was smiling blithely at him, next time he came down the car.

"What an adorable thing you are in your buttons, Jack!" she told him gayly. "You know I never saw you so dressed up before. Do let your porter do things, and you come back and stay with us. I want to hear about Mr. Savarin, and all the rest of it. Besides," heedless of the other passengers, she laid her hand on his and smiled straight up into his watching eyes; "remember I've been short a brother, for almost two weeks. Now I've found him again, I want to make the most of his society."

Rob dodged the little splash of sentiment.

"How long do you stop over in Quebec, Jack?"

"Till to-morrow afternoon."

"Jack!" Day started up in consternation. "You don't mean you're going off again?"

Rob laughed.

"I say, Day, did you think this was a special trip made in our honour?" he inquired.

"But now we have come back?" she urged. "Must you go, Jack?"

"Every trip I make means just so much more for Savarin," he told her.

Unexpectedly, Rob ranged himself upon Jack's side.

"Moreover, every trip you make shows you are acting from a set purpose, not a whim," he added gravely. "I don't know how long you're in for, Jack; but, in your place, I think I'd stick it out."

Day shook her head forlornly at her fingers, where they lay shut over Jack's.

"So would I, I hope. I'm not too sure. Still — I do believe this thing will make me prouder than ever of you, Jack, even if I could n't well be fonder."

"I'm glad," he answered. "I was a little worried, Day, to know just how you were going to take it."

She faced him, rebuke in her eyes and on her tongue.

"Jack! How could you?"

Again Rob interposed.

"Apropos of boots, when do you get in from your next expedition?" he asked.

"To-day's Tuesday? Friday noon, then."

"And are off again, next day? That's a fine prospect for me." Rob sighed ostentatiously. "Day, I want to go back to mama. In all your hen-party, who'll play with me, when Jack is gone?"

"There's Paul."

"Paul! He's nothing but an infant."

But Jack looked up sharply. Then he shook his head.

"Not a bit of it, Rob. On the contrary, he's very much a man."

And a man he showed himself, that night, every

inch of him. He, with Amy Pope, Sidney and the two Argyles, had joined Jack on the terrace. Then, finding the crowd too thick, the band too strident to allow much conversation, they had climbed far up the glacis in search of a quiet spot. There, settled in a close ring on the short, crisp grass, they alternated between talking all at once, and allowing the pauses to grow long, while they stared down on the panorama of lights spread out beneath. By common consent, they one and all avoided the subject of the recent warfare, the participants because they were weary of the ugly theme and glad to turn to the fresher interests of Rob and Day; the Argyles because they supposed that, hours since, they had been put in possession of all the facts.

Rob was the first to find out his mistake. He found it out by way of Paul, that very night. It was long after the echoes of the evening gun had died away in the still distance that the group came down the glacis; it was long, long after that that the group in the Leslie drawing-room disbanded. Paul followed the rest upstairs, exchanged a last good-night or two, then lingered irresolutely in the upper hall. Rob, limping across the floor of his room to throw the casement wider open, stood for a moment, looking thoughtfully down into the gray old street beneath. When he turned away, it was to see Paul lingering outside his door.

"Come along in," he bade him.

"Are n't you sleepy?"

"Not a bit. Fact is, I miss Jack. We used to talk till all hours." As he spoke, Rob moved a chair forward, then dropped into another chair, clasped his hands behind his head, straightened out his weak knee and prepared for a comfortable gossip.

"Beastly shame about him!" Paul strolled across the floor and dropped down in the chair awaiting him. "By Jove, Argyle, it's good to have you back again!" he observed contentedly.

Rob laughed.

"On the principle that any old thing is better than nothing?" he inquired.

"Yes, when it's masculine. I like girls—with intermissions; but not too many all at once, nor yet when they are on their nerves."

"It's been a little murky now and then?"

"Rather! I never would have stayed it out, you know, if it had n't been for Tids, coupled with a general desire to see fair play."

"You think the fault—"

"Was Janet's," Paul said conclusively. "Of course, Jack brought the matter to a direct issue. Then, what made it whole lots worse, the girls all turned hysterical and argued round and round the subject, till Jack and I both were half dazed by the delicate things they did n't say."

"Hm! Well. Then?"

Paul laughed shortly, while he rubbed his fingers through and through his hair till it was all on end.

"Then I gritted my teeth and had it out in plain



Saxon: that we cared enough about the fellow himself not to mind it, if he were stoker, barring a natural regret for his complexion. It was rather like slugging your dearest friend in the face; but it was best to have it over and done with. Now we know where we all stand."

"Including Janet," Rob assented, with a chuckle.

"Not she."

"Why not?"

"Too unreliable," Paul answered briefly.

Rob sat up abruptly and unclasped his hands.

"Hang it, Paul! That's not fair," he made remonstrance.

"It is, then. If lying does n't make a girl unreliable, then I don't know what does. And you know, yourself, that Janet lied, to all intents and purposes, to Gladys Horth."

"I don't know anything of the sort," Rob contradicted him just a little sternly. "Please tell me where Gladys Horth comes in."

Suddenly Paul turned scarlet and clapped his hands across his mouth.

"Oh, thunderation!" he exclaimed, through the muffling barrier of his fingers. "Tids told me that you were n't to know, and here I've been and made a mess of the whole thing!"

"I think perhaps," Rob told him gravely; "you'd best go on now and tell me what you mean. You've gone too far to make it quite fair to anybody to stop just at this point."

Paul heaved a sigh, ostensibly of remorse, really of relief.

"As you say," he answered meekly. "I suppose I ought to be a pulp of penitence, after the break I've made; but it really will be a comfort to talk the whole mess over with another chap. Of course, there was Jack; but he was a little bit too nearly concerned to be the best sort of dumping ground for one's reflections. If you really want to know the whole blamed business, then here goes." And straightway he launched into the story.

Before they separated, that night, Rob was in full possession of all the facts. Before breakfast, next morning, he had imparted them to Day. Breakfast over, the brother and sister sought their hats and gloves. Then they sought Gladys Horth.

They found her on the strip of lawn before her house, and Day lost no time in coming to the point. Instead of that, she waved aside Gladys' salutations rather brusquely, and followed her hostess to the house.

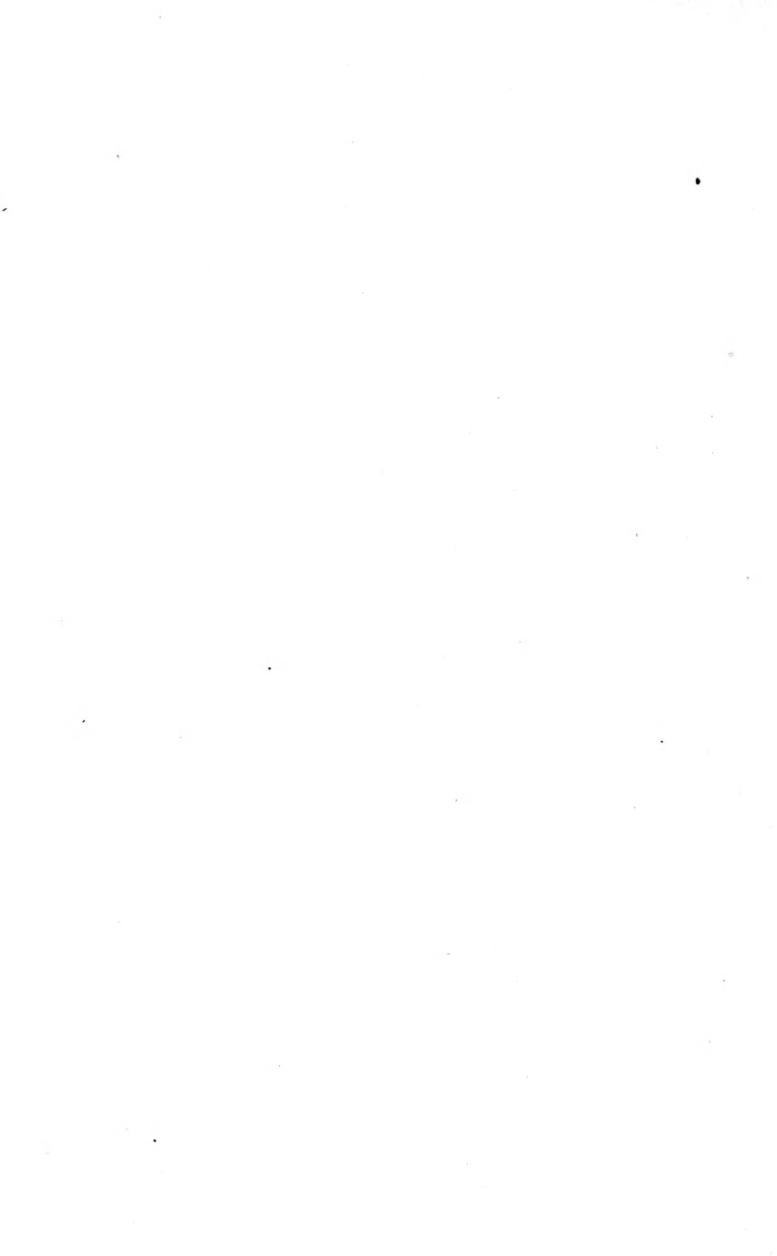
"No; I'd rather come inside, if you don't mind," she answered the suggestion of Gladys that they sit down on the lawn where they could enjoy the view. "We can talk better there, without being afraid of being interrupted."

Accustomed as, by this time, she had become to American directness, Gladys yet looked a little startled. For once, Day Argyle was too much in earnest to pay much attention to such small ques-



"They found her on the strip of lawn before her house."

— Page 272.



tions as that of tact, and her manner was unduly pugnacious.

"Certainly," Gladys assented, with becoming meekness. Then she led the way inside the drawing-room.

"I came," Day announced directly, as soon as they were seated; "to have a little talk with you about Jack Blanchard."

"Mr. Blanchard?" Gladys echoed, plainly mystified. In her mystification, she glanced at Rob.

Day intercepted the glance, and made her own interpretation of it.

"My brother feels as I do," she said quickly. "And, of course, what one of us knows, the other is sure to. We came back here, yesterday, to find there had been some grand misunderstanding about Jack, and we thought we'd better come to the point at once. Before he was in my father's office, for a few years he was conductor of a sleeping-car, a splendidly efficient conductor, they all say. Rob knew him then. Now he is my father's secretary. More than that, though, he makes his home with us, and is our — Rob's and my — best friend."

Concise and uncompromising as a declaration of war, she threw the words at Gladys Horth. Gladys received them unflinchingly.

"Well, what of it?" she inquired.

"What of it!" Day stared at her in stupefaction. "Janet Leslie told our girls that you — all you Canadian girls — would cut him, if you knew it."

Gladys shook her head.

"Oh, no," she said serenely. "He's quite too nice for that. We like him, all of us." Suddenly her serenity broke into something as much like animation as Gladys Horth could show. "Was that the reason Janet —" She paused, seeking a word which should be both polite and accurate.

"Fibbed?" Day saw no need for mincing matters. "Yes, it was."

"Really? How very funny!" And to Rob's amusement and to Day's supreme disgust, Gladys went off into a peal of laughter. When she could speak again, "If that is n't Janet all over!" she observed.

This time, Day veered round to the support of the absent Janet.

"Not as I have ever known her," she responded.

"Then you've really never known her," Gladys retorted flatly, yet with no hint of bitterness in her tone. "I've been friends with Janet, since we were babies. Every now and then she does this kind of thing. When she's very tired, she seems to lose her balance, and think things about people, distrust them a little bit. It has made some frightful quarrels, while they lasted; and yet," she added generously; "when it is all over, there is n't a girl in the whole world quicker to admit she's wrong and say she's sorry than Janet Leslie."

"No," Day answered quickly. "No; there is n't."

"Besides that," Gladys spoke thoughtfully, her eyes upon the carpet; "I suppose it does change the looks of things, the side from which you look at them. If you and I had to — to give up a good share of our fun, and pinch and scrimp and grind to get along, and, all the time, watch our old friends having things and doing things and — Really, I fancy we'd get to thinking things as Janet does."

Rob had sat silent heretofore, listening and studying the two girls so totally unlike, thanking providence that Day was the one to be his sister. Now, his blue eyes fixed on Gladys' face in manifest approval, he came to her support.

"Miss Horth, you've hit the nail on the head. We don't know much about it; but, if we've any common sense, we must admit that Janet Leslie is a plucky little chap, and deserves to have her sins forgiven, for the sake of the way she's trying to make the best of a bad matter."

"And she does try, too," Gladys assented swiftly. "She's worked like a little slave, all summer long. I know more than you do about that. When she begged off from going out with you, it usually was because she had to go into that hot kitchen or help Elsie upstairs. It's a huge house, and there were a small army of you to look out for. As a natural consequence, she was all tired out, and cross, and discouraged. The summer has n't come out, anyway, just as Janet hoped. She had been counting so much on Paul, and, when he came, they did n't hit it off

together at all. That fretted her, in the first place, and, just as that was getting over the worst, Lady Wadhams appeared and upset her again. Finally, Mr. Blanchard ran against one of her pet prejudices—for the Leslie's always did draw their lines a little closer than the rest of us did. That was the reason she took it all out on him so."

"And made you the cat's paw?" Rob queried, with a bluntness that was belied by the liking in his eyes.

Gladys laughed lightly.

"Me? I don't mind. I know Janet, and that her growl is the most dangerous thing about her. She never really bites."

Day shook her head.

"I am afraid she has, this time. What is more, she has hurt."

Gladys' face changed instantly.

"You think Mr. Blanchard knew about it?"

Day stiffened a little.

"He came up here to spend the summer with us all. He is boarding at the Saint Louis now, whenever he is in town," she said incisively.

"But if he likes it better?" Gladys urged. "Of course, I thought it was a queer thing for him to do; but if he really felt it was more convenient?"

Day's answer was uncompromising.

"I don't see how it could be much more convenient. The houses are only two blocks apart; and his quarters were certainly quite as comfortable at Janet's



as at the hotel. As far as his liking it better is concerned, though, he naturally would prefer not to stay where he certainly was n't wanted."

Gladys hesitated. Then, —

"I am afraid I don't quite understand about it, after all," she said a little plaintively. "It all seems very much mixed up."

There was a little pause, while Day looked across at Rob. He nodded, and then they set to work together to make her understand.

When, an hour later, the Argyles rose to take their leave, Day held out her hand to her hostess with a better liking than she ever had thought it possible to gain towards this young Canadian girl whose reticence rendered her seemingly so smug. Together, they had talked the situation over to its very foundations, had discussed in detail and in singular agreement Jack's place among them, Janet's character. Now and then Rob put in a word; but, for the most part, he sat back and left the talk to the others. Liking Janet and adoring Jack, he yet felt he could safely leave them both in the just hands of the two young girls.

"I am sorry," Gladys told them, as they rose to go; "if I've been at all to blame in this thing. I did n't mean to; I supposed Janet knew me better. Now I think it over, though, I can see how I may have started the whole trouble by my asking where you first picked Jack up."

Day laughed.

"Really, now you think of it, you must admit it was n't a complimentary phrase," she said, with all her old, gay directness. "No wonder Janet took it all askew."

"No," Gladys admitted frankly; "I don't wonder in the least. I don't think I ever realized till now, though, just how much trouble a phrase like that could make. Mr. Blanchard was a stranger to me; I was sure I recognized him, and I was curious to know how he came to be with you all. I used the first words that popped into my head, just as I'd have done with any stranger I was n't likely to see again. By the time I was acquainted with him, I had forgotten all about it. You will believe so much; won't you?" Her glance included them both.

Day held out her hand impulsively.

"So much so that I can't be glad enough we came," she answered. "It was Rob's idea. I thought we did n't know you well enough; but he was bound to go to the bottom of the thing, before he attacked Janet."

Gladys shook her head a little.

"Be as gentle as you can," she urged. "Remember how tired she is, and — all the rest."

"I will," Day promised gravely. "But then, you see, there's Jack."

"I know." Gladys spoke swiftly. "And there is also myself. I was a good deal to blame for the whole thing, even if I did n't mean it. I knew Janet, how she dwells on things the rest of us forget all

about. I ought to have been more careful about my words. But one can make so much trouble, without intending it in the very least; and I suppose I did sound snippy." She shook her head at the rug, as if it had been the culprit. "Really, I believe I have been about as much to blame as Janet. I only wish I could do something now to help mend matters." Suddenly she looked up, her eyes alert with a new idea. "When does he get through with this thing?" she asked.

"Not for a week longer, at the very least."

"A week. Let me see. When do you all go back?"

"The first of September. At least," Day laughed; "it depends on circumstances."

Gladys understood, as her answering laugh betokened.

"As far as that goes, I hope it will be a good deal later," she said heartily. "What's more, I think it may be. I saw Janet, yesterday, and it seemed as if her superiority was breaking up a little bit; I thought she even seemed a bit depressed. That has always been the sign the worst was over. But, to go back to Mr. Blanchard: do you happen to know what are his nights in town?"

"Happen we do," Rob answered promptly. "He's here on Tuesday and Friday; you'll get him at the Saint Louis, when he is n't with us on the terrace." He laughed, as he raised his yellow brows in mute suggestion. "You might come, too," he added.

“ Thanks. Perhaps I will. Tuesdays and Fridays? Very well, I ’ll remember. Must you go? ” She gave her hand to Day and then to Rob. “ I ’m glad you came to talk it over, ” she said simply. “ I find it always best. ”

Side by side, the brother and sister left the house, turned southward and went loitering around the Ramparts. When they were safely out of hearing, —

“ Day, ” Rob said, with slow deliberation; “ that is a girl. ”

## CHAPTER TWENTY

**M**EANWHILE, inside the Leslie house in Louis Street, a new interest had arisen, threatening at times to obliterate even the thought of Jack. After all said and done, the skirmishing once ended, there was a certain monotony in what Amy Browne termed the Blanchard crisis. The newer interest never at any single instant held in its make-up the germ of monotony. It was far-reaching, absorbing; it engrossed them one and all, destroyed their leisure, modified their comfort, and always and ever it insisted upon holding their attention, whether they would or no. Its source was the stranger baby; its circumference was measured by the outside limits of the entire household, including Mary Browne.

From the hour of his advent, shrieking and trying to stand on his head in the arms of Paul, Amy Pope had stoutly maintained that she merely had borrowed the child for a few days, in order to fit him to some seemly garments. The fitting, however, took a vast amount of time, the more so as all the garments obtainable in the shops at once became unseemly, viewed in the critical eyes of a quartette of girls brought up in French lingerie nighties with real lace frills. Janet sniffed, pronouncing anything good enough for a Saint Sauveur baby. Sidney merely

laughed and held her peace. The others, treating the squirming child as a vast and unwieldy sort of doll, ransacked the shops for baby finery, tried it on, despite the remonstrances of the child who seemed loath to part with his single outing flannel garment, shook their heads and proceeded to find objections. And this state of things, beginning at noon, four days before, was showing no sign of cessation when Rob and Day came strolling homeward from their call on Gladys.

"Paul's infant prodigy is tuning up again," Rob offered observation as, at his sister's side, he rounded the corner out of Garden Street. "Jove, Day, what a hurdy-gurdy that kid's lungs would make!"

"Or bagpipes," she amended. "It's a good deal more like that. What do you suppose Amy means to do with him?"

"She said she only borrowed him long enough to —"

"Equip him with a wardrobe," Day struck in. "Yes, I heard that fable, yesterday. I also saw a heap of clothes in Amy's room, clothes enough to stock an infant class in Sunday school. That will do to tell; but what she really means to do with him is a mystery."

Rob lifted his brows.

"She can't covet him for his charm of manner," he remarked. "Moreover, from my own memory of the quarter where he has been residing, the last few

weeks, I have an impression that frilly clothes are n't a necessity, if she means to send him back."

"Asylums provide their own clothes," Day added. "What can she be going to do with him?"

"Something wild and different," Rob predicted. "You can't do much foretelling, when it's a case of Amy Pope; but at least, you can be mighty certain there's something bound to be doing, whenever Amy takes a hand. Meanwhile, have you heard the Dame offering any observations?"

"Not about him. She's terribly chastened and sniffly about dear old Jack. In fact, I rather think, from her general air of penitential meekness, that she accepts the infant as a special, back-handed punishment meted out to her to make up for Jack's sins."

"I say, Day," Rob spoke reflectively; "has it ever occurred to you to rejoice and give thanks that our mother stands, heels down, and also has some sense of humour?"

Day turned the white of one eye on him. Then she thrust her hand inside his arm.

"Rob! How disrespectful! But — has n't it till now to you?"

"Bet!" Rob answered concisely. Then he pointed to the upper windows with his stick, for by now they had reached the Leslie house. "Party's going on, up there," he added. "What's more, it seems to be a strenuous sort of session. I say, Aurora dearest, what if we pass by on the other side, and go take a little drive? For my taste, this infant's sing-

ing is rather too much after Wagner. In fact, I begin to think that Wagner may end by getting licked."

"I wish the child would," Day said vindictively.

Meanwhile, within the house, the scene indeed was waxing strenuous; yet, for all that, it was not unique. The past four days had taught Paul and the girls a good many new lessons in infant psychology; and, the worst of it was, the psychology appeared to them to be one enormous, concentrated joke. Bewashed, becurled, befrilled, the baby had ceased to be soggy and unattractive-looking; he was undeniably clever, and his force of character was astounding, astounding, too, his skill in setting forth in intelligible, although wordless, phrases the results of his infant meditations. Just why he should repine for his old surroundings it would be hard to say, for he was fed and clothed as never before, and he was constantly surrounded by at least three eager nurses, while the neighbour had testified by way of the policeman that apparently he had not deigned to give a thought to his departed family. Nevertheless, he did repine, not querulously, but with full-lunged, full-throated, vehement decision. In other words, he kicked against the pricks, and his kickings were by no means always of the spirit. It took the entire time of at least one person to keep him even mildly acquiescent; but, with a whole half-dozen junior nurses eager to take their turn, he had no lack of care.

To be sure, these junior nurses were not always



wholly sympathetic. They made him as comfortable as lay within their power, far, far more comfortable than he had ever been of old; but, that done, they laughed at his repinings, made merry over his grimaces, and obviously rejoiced when he stretched forth his lusty little legs and kicked at them angrily, as they drew near to offer food and toys. All in all, he was not a pleasant baby to have about. Nevertheless, the girls assumed the care of him hilariously, and proceeded to make the best of him, while Amy Pope decided what to do next.

"It's just exactly the way my Boston terrier puppy behaved, when I first had him," Amy Browne sighed, the second night. "For the first week, he yelped every single instant, day and night, yelped and tore the furniture to pieces. Really, I thought we never could live through it, and I haven't been through such an experience since, till now."

Paul echoed her sigh.

"I should think once would have been quite enough," he suggested.

"It was, quite. And yet, this infant is funny. Besides, you have n't anything to say. It was you who brought him down on all our heads. What do you suppose —"

"Well?" Paul jogged her.

Amy changed her accent, seeking to lay even greater stress upon her question.

"What do you suppose Amy ever means to do with him?"

Paul shrugged his shoulders.

"Ask Amy," he responded tersely.

And they did ask Amy, at least forty times a day; but a smile was the only answer she vouchsafed to all their questions. At last, however, towards the close of the sixth day, she did grant to Rob Argyle some meagre satisfaction.

"Feed him up a little till he gets fat; have Elsie scour him till he is enough accustomed to the process not to look too shiny afterwards, and then get him a little fitted to his clothes."

"And then?"

Amy laughed.

"Then? Then we'll see."

"Amy, you fraud!" Day interposed, from her seat across the room. "You've something in your brain. Out with it."

"It would swamp you — utterly," Amy answered gravely. "I should hate to see you swamped."

"I don't mean everything you know; only just about the baby."

Amy smiled at her benevolently.

"He is mine, by right of possession. The police gave him to Paul. Paul presented him to me. The rest I'll tell you, when I get ready."

"Then there really is a rest?"

"Not at night," Rob interposed. "He goes beddy-by exactly under me, and — Really, Amy, I am just learning that, in comparison with some things, snoring can be sweet music."

"Does he carouse, all night long, Rob?" Day queried. "I should n't suppose he'd have enough vitality to keep it up, the whole twenty-four hours."

"I thought it was he that I heard," Rob said guardedly. "Of course, it might have been—there's no sure telling from the room overhead—it might have been Mrs. Blanchard."

"Poor Mrs. Blanchard!" Day's voice was full of thoughtful chiding. "Does n't your conscience ever prick you, Amy?"

"Yes, now and then a little bit," Amy made answer grimly. "However, Mrs. Blanchard is the unconscious means to a good end. Besides, when I think of Jack—" She paused; then added, with apparent inconsequence, "And this child is n't very gentlemanly, either."

But Amy was a little less remorseless in the matter than she sounded. Although an unconscious means to some good end, Mrs. Blanchard was by no means an unwilling one. She was of the 'mental feather-bolster' type of woman, one whose first conviction on beholding a baby was that no one else could take one half so good care of it as she herself. It never would have occurred to her in the first place to annex a baby of unknown ancestry and too easily discovered disposition. Now that Amy Pope had annexed one, however, she promptly brushed aside all interference and, in essential matters, she assumed it as her own especial care. That is to say, she put in pins and tied up strings; she prescribed his proper

diet, and she ordained that, at a fixed and suitable hour, he should be put to bed. At that exact point, however, her jurisdiction stopped. Not all the Mrs. Blanchards in creation, although armed with soothing syrups by the pint, could coerce the baby into going to sleep against his will. Moreover, his infant lungs operated to the very best advantage, when he lay prone on top of the blanket he had promptly kicked aside.

Mrs. Blanchard was past seventy, and fragile. None the less, she bore her new burden valiantly, and stuck to it that the child must sleep in a crib beside her bed; that he merely fretted just a little bit, but that it did not disturb her in the least. Perhaps, after all, there was a grain of truth in her assertion. It might have been that the fretting, fussing baby boy served to break the dull monotony of the long, wakeful hours when she lay and thought of her own boy who, against her will, but for the sake of conscience, was riding, riding, the whole night through. It might have been even a relief when an infant temper distracted her mind from watching the slow passing of the moments from two o'clock to three, from thinking of her Jack, sitting in a corner of the car, tired out, dull and alone, and waiting with what patience he could gather up out of the tedious day, for the coming of the time when the regulations of his uniform allowed him to turn in. As a rule, both Mrs. Blanchard and the baby had their soundest sleep, after three o'clock.

But Jack, meanwhile, was by no means wholly wretched. True, his hours were long, his duties tiresome, his passengers a good deal of a bore. Nevertheless, there was a certain interest in fitting himself back into the well-remembered groove, in seeing it fit itself about him; in finding out, best of all, that his years of prosperous growth, instead of spoiling him for the old task, had trained him until he seemed to know by instinct just how to make the very most of it. It was as if his groove had broadened with his own broadening. Phases of his work which, in the old days, never would have occurred to him as being necessary, or even possible, now appeared to him mere matters of routine.

Apart from that, and even more good were the greetings which met him, all up and down the line: the flash of white teeth shining out from the coal-streaked face of a passing stoker, the grip of a hand, hurriedly wiped on a bunch of cotton waste, the sheepish grin of the old waiter at the breakfast station, as he slid on to Jack's plate the juiciest cut of steak, the hilarious greeting of an old-time passenger: all these things assured Jack Blanchard that a well-made place is never really filled by any outsider. And then, when he came back to the city, often and often to find Paul or Rob on the platform as the train came in, he never was really sure whether his best times lay in his long evenings on the terrace with his well-tried friends, or in his ten-minute calls at the Jeffrey Hale where Savarin, his anxiety

in part allayed, was making daily strides towards the regaining of his health.

There was pleasure in all these things; not sanctified joy, but real honest, human pleasure. Accordingly, it was with a little feeling of regret, one noon, that Jack took from the clerk at the Saint Louis a note from Mr. Argyle.

"I think your experiment, from all accounts, has been a grand success," the letter ran; "and I can't be glad enough that you undertook it. It does n't do us any harm to make sure, now and then, that we can step back into our old shoes, and, what's more, walk off in them without tripping up. However, as long as you're coming back to the office on the first, I think perhaps you'd best stop running about the country. You'd best send in your resignation, then, for the end of the week. Rob and Day are getting restless without you, and I want them to stay on up there and finish out the summer. And, by the way, will you please endorse this check over to the Savarin baby? I did n't know the name; but you can put it through, all right." And the letter ended, after a word of liking and good will so personal that Jack was never willing to quote it.

Still standing by the desk, the note in one hand, the check in the other, Jack was aroused from his reverie by being summoned to the telephone to answer a call from Gladys Horth.

A little later on, Gladys called up Janet. In due season, Janet reported the call to the group of girls

who were trying to coax the baby not to make a double bow-knot of himself while Irene was seeking to put on him a fresh white frock. The fresh white frock's predecessor lay upon the floor with milk and dark green ink struggling for mastery upon its sodden surface.

"I was only just offering him a little drink," Amy Browne said apologetically, while she gathered up the dripping front breadth of her pale pink muslin skirt. "He cried, and we had given him everything else in vain, so I supposed he must be hungry. How could I know it would go on his nerves like this?"

"What did he do, anyway, Miss Amy?" Mary Browne queried from the threshold, where she stood waiting to receive the discarded frock.

"Knocked the milk out of my hand, and then kicked the ink off the table on top of us both. I wish I knew who left the stuff uncorked!" Amy said vindictively, for she hated unneatness of any kind, and even the least critical of victims would have felt that ink and milk and pink muslin breadths do not make an attractive combination.

"I did it," Sidney confessed. "I was marking some new pages in my photograph book. Really, Amy, I'm very sorry; but I never supposed he could kick so far."

"Kick! He'd kick the moon," Amy made testy answer. "I don't mind my gown; it's on its second season, but do look at the rug. What do you suppose Janet will say?"

"She's here to speak for herself," Paul announced, from the window-seat where he sat watching the infant cyclone whirl along its pathway. "Look there, Janet, and behold! Now out with it, and say your say frankly, like a little man."

But Janet disdained the question of the rug. Instead, —

"Gladys is holding the wire to know whether we'll all go down there to spend the evening," she announced. "Is there any reason we can't go?"

Paul frowned at Amy Pope, who frowned back at him malignly.

"What about Jack?" he asked, too low for the others to hear.

Amy shrugged her shoulders.

"No use. We're bound to go. Remember that nowadays it's peace at any price."

Sidney's eye, meanwhile, was going from face to face around the group.

"All right, Janet. Tell her we'll all go with pleasure," she said, when her circuit was complete.

Rob, however, from the other window-seat, put in a question.

"Does this include the lusty baby boy off yonder?" he inquired, in hollow accents. "If it does, I thank you, I have a previous engagement of a most pressing kind."

However, it was Rob who banged with the Horthi knocker, that same evening, Rob in his state array



and smiling from ear to ear. He had liked Gladys Horth extremely, in that last long talk of theirs; he felt certain that she would make a most attractive hostess. Moreover, the lusty baby boy had been left behind in bed, and that alone was a sufficient cause for full content to a budding Harvard senior who felt far more interest in football than in infant psychology. And yet, now and then in the past week, Rob had regretted that his lame leg had knocked him once and for all out of football. There had been occasions when he had felt convinced that the baby would have made an excellent substitute for the more conventional pigskin, providing he himself were on the playing team. Just once, he mentioned this belief to Amy Pope. Amy had snubbed him rudely.

"You probably did exactly the same things, yourself, when you were a little baby," she argued.

Rob produced counter argument, and it was a clincher.

"Look at my mother! She has n't got any wrinkles down beside her nose."

"Hush!" Amy chid him, with seeming inconsequence. "Here comes Mrs. Blanchard now. Still, it is n't all the baby; a part of it is Jack."

The baby, then, had been stowed away betimes, and left with Mary Browne as jailer, since Mrs. Blanchard, as now and then occurred, had been included in the invitation. Dinner over and the last touch added to their toilettes, they had sallied forth,

Rob in the lead with Day and Sidney, Paul and Amy Pope bringing up the rear.

Gladys brushed aside the maid who let them in, and met them in the hall, herself, her hands held out in greeting. She was more enthusiastic than it was her wont to be, more elaborately dressed than usual. They all took silent note of the fact, silently wondered what could be its explanation, while she chattered on.

"It's so good of you all to come. Janet, let Mr. Argyle pull you out of that coat, while I help Mrs. Blanchard with her scarf. Wait one minute. It is caught on your comb. It's so cool, to-night, I have a fire in the grate. It looks cosy, even if we do have to open all the windows. Now, if you're ready, come right in here." And, still chattering, she led the way into the long drawing-room, dim, fire-lighted and full of comfort, to where a tall, broad-shouldered figure stood beside the hearth. "Mr. Blanchard is here ahead of you," she added, with cheery nonchalance. "I coaxed him to come down in time for dinner."

Then she stood back to watch the successful working out of her small plan.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

“**R**EALLY, Amy,” Janet observed, with the British bluntness that assailed her at times; “I did n’t think you would look so very ugly. Else, I never would have told you.”

“Told her what?”

Janet poured another cup of coffee, passed the cup to Paul; then she made tranquil answer, —

“Told her what Jack said, you know.”

“What did he say?”

“Were n’t you there? No?” Janet raised her brows. “Really, I remember now. It was the morning you and Paul were kidnapping the baby, the day after Amy Browne had burned off all her hair.”

“What did I say?” Jack asked defensively, for he was once more back in his old place at table, as Gladys had made sure he would be. “I don’t remember at all, Amy; but I’m willing to apologize in advance.”

“You said that you’d rather girls did n’t curl up their hair and do things of that sort; that you’d rather we’d be ugly than artificial,” Janet reminded him.

There came a chorus of protesting shrieks, in the midst of which Jack laid down his knife and fork and clasped his hands.

"Guilty," he admitted meekly. "However," he threw an expressive glance at Amy Browne who had appeared at breakfast, shorn of her becoming fluffiness; "however, I recant."

"Is that the way you stick to your guns, Jack?" Amy Pope demanded in disdain.

Jack picked up his fork once more.

"Yes, in a case like this. You see, I took my position in a hurry, without stopping to think of all the consequences it might involve," he confessed. "In theory, I prefer nature unadorned; in practice," his eyes twinkled, as he looked again at Amy Browne's smooth, shining pate, where the hair lay in close bands about her forehead; "in practice, Amy, I beseech you to fuzz yourself up a little bit. It may not be an elevated taste; but I do think it makes you look a whole lot prettier."

"But what ever possessed you to tell Amy, Janet?" Sidney asked, when the laughter had subsided.

"I thought it was only fair for her to know it," Janet returned, with a second attack of racial bluntness. "She has been more curly than ever, since Jack came back here, and, when I knew he hated it and that she was doing it on his account, it did n't seem just fair to allow it to go on."

Jack looked up alertly.

"On my account, Amy?" he queried.

Her answer held no touch of girlish self-consciousness, none of coquetry.

"Certainly. Lacking a fatted calf to kill, I pro-

ceeded to adorn myself. How else could you know how glad I was to see you?"

How else, indeed? Save for Janet who was passively polite, impersonally cordial, the entire household, down to Mary Browne, had been in a state of extreme jubilation over Jack's return. The fact of Jack's return had been established beyond a doubt, before they had left Gladys Horth's that night a week before. It was Gladys who settled the matter, Gladys, smiling, tactful, suave, yet so masterful that Janet even was powerless to stand out against her. Gladys had smoothed over the momentary embarrassment of their unexpected meeting, had forestalled Janet's hostility by taking it for granted that Janet was really pining to see Jack again and, leaving the others to amuse themselves as best they could, by sitting down to gossip with them in a corner. She had engineered their talk up to the very moment when Janet was beginning to enjoy it; then she had swept Jack away to make himself useful as co-host. Later, it was Jack, not Rob, nor Paul, who helped to serve the coffee, Jack who brought out the card tables, mended the fire, Jack to whom her smiles were given. Gladys understood Janet through and through. Moreover, she was a thorough woman. She knew that Jack would never be one half so valuable in the eyes of Janet Leslie as when he basked in the smiles of one of her old-time Canadian girl friends.

Jack, meanwhile, although slightly mystified by this sudden change of front, yet accepted it all with

imperturbable calm, and enjoyed to the full the eager friendliness of his dainty little hostess. The others, half comprehending and wholly in sympathy with Gladys' plan, whatever it might prove to be, threw themselves heart and soul into making the evening a success. Gladys would have achieved that selfsame end without help, however. For the moment, she was completely mistress of the situation, and there was a wicked, victorious little sparkle in her eyes when, at the last, she put Janet down to play cards with Jack as partner and herself and Rob as opposites. The sparkle came again, when they all rose to say good night.

"How soon do you go back to live under your mother's wing, Mr. Blanchard?" she asked audaciously.

Before there could come even an instant's pause, Rob had flung himself into the breach.

"I say, why don't you come along up with us now?" he inquired, with cheery, casual unconcern. "You might as well. My room carries double, and I hate to have to spread all over it alone. Come along, man; now's the accepted time."

Gladys nodded in quick acquiescence.

"Do you mind going upstairs to telephone?" she asked Rob, with a casualness equal to his own. "You may as well settle the matter with the Saint Louis people from here, so his things will be sent right up. You can telephone, while Mr. Blanchard is hunting up my mother. I think you'll find her in

the other room. No? Janet dear, would you mind looking in her room upstairs?"

And, by the time Janet had reappeared with Mrs. Horth beside her, the matter was too fully decided to make any indifference on Janet's part a thing to count, one way or the other.

That had been a full week before. Since that time, Jack had ended his self-made appointment, had returned his misfit uniform, and had made over to Savarin, now convalescent, the three-weeks' salary which dwindled into nothing in comparison with Mr. Argyle's check. In the mere matter of good will, however, the one was as valuable as the other; and little Savarin had to take off his befogged glasses, before he could look up to smile his thanks. Jack had nodded in careless acquiescence, wished him good luck, promised to look in again to see him soon, and gone his way. For him, the episode was ended.

After all, though, it did seem rather good to Jack to settle down again into a life of idleness, to punch no more blue checks, to answer no more inane questions, to return to an existence where tea was a mere matter of the day's routine, and where his bedtime depended solely upon his own preferences. Moreover, the summer was waning fast. Here and there a scarlet maple branch, a yellowing birch gave sign that the autumn was close at hand and, with it, their migration southward. Only a week or so remained to them before the little party scattered, and of their plans there were yet a good round dozen unfulfilled.

It was as if, with the beginning of the tercentenary celebrations, individual plans had ceased to be. After that had come chaos: Mary Browne's invalidism, the Argyles' going away, the departure of Jack. And then had come the baby.

Moreover, to all appearing, the baby had come to stay. In regard to any future plans, Amy Pope was reticent. The others, as the days went on, were not reticent in the least. The novelty of the situation wore off more swiftly than did the angles of the baby's temper. Besides, they had planned for days of canoeing, days spent in the bush, or in climbing the low mountains beyond Sainte Anne. Paul had insisted on a day in his old haunts at Grande Rivière, and there was even talk of their going in a body up the Saguenay. But how could all this be accomplished, when they had upon their hands this baby who was so prompt about resenting the least hint of neglect?

To be sure, Mrs. Blanchard was fast becoming the baby's willing slave; but some of those same expeditions demanded Mrs. Blanchard's presence. Moreover, after ten nights of strenuous activity upon the baby's part, Mrs. Blanchard's dark-ringed eyes and whitening cheeks bore witness to the strain she was enduring. Not all the good will in the world can atone for lack of sleep. One morning at the breakfast table, Day studied Mrs. Blanchard; then she had it out with Rob, and then she led the mutiny.

"Does it ever strike you," she demanded with deliberation, as she walked in upon a sewing bee



where Irene and Sidney and the Amys were busy with white nainsook and tiny paper patterns; "has it ever struck you that charity begins at home?"

Amy Pope looked up.

"Exactly," she said calmly. "Please begin." And she offered Day a threaded needle.

Day waved the needle aside.

"I don't mean that," she said, quite sternly for easy-going Day.

"What do you mean, then, dearie?" But Amy's eyes belied her tone, for they looked a little guilty.

"I mean this," Day said bluntly. "If you girls want to make geese of yourselves over a baby with nobody knows what sort of inherited queernesses, when you easily can afford to buy him clothes and put him to board in a good place, you are quite welcome. What is it, Amy?"

"It is personal effort that counts in a case like this," Amy observed, with mock sanctity.

"Personal spankings, you'd better say!" Day made energetic answer. "He is certainly the crossdest baby I ever set my eyes on. However, if you think he's an amusing toy, keep him and welcome. Still, if you do keep him, you ought in all decency to keep him all the time, not tuck him off on Mrs. Blanchard, when he gets to be too much for you to manage."

Irene looked up, her eyes, too, a little troubled.

"Really, Day, I think she likes the little fellow," she said, in swift defence.

"Perhaps she does. So do you like Welsh rarebit.

That 's no sign it 's good for you," Day answered uncompromisingly. "Mrs. Blanchard is growing visibly less, day by day. If that child keeps on raging, all night long, the poor lady will fade away and vanish before our very eyes, and then where 'll we be, I 'd like to know, without our lawful chaperon? Really and truly, girls, it is n't fair at all."

"But if she insists on having him in her room, nights? And she does," Amy Browne urged.

"Stand on your heels, and tell her it is out of the question," Day said firmly. "Has n't it occurred to you that Mrs. Blanchard was invited to be here as lady of the manor and our guest, not to slave as baby-tender, all night and every night? I have been expecting, this whole week, that Jack would interfere. It is his place; I should n't blame him, if he did. As long as he does n't — I suppose he hates to do it, when we 're all girls — I thought it was about time I took the matter up, myself."

"What do you want us to do about it, Day?" Amy Browne queried meekly, for it was not often that Day Argyle spoke with so much decision.

The decision continued, even increased a little bit.

"Either send the child away; or, if you don't do that, then insist on taking the care, the whole care, of him, yourselves."

A little silence followed Day's ultimatum. Amy Pope broke it, and her voice lacked all its wonted tone of mockery.

"Just give me two days more grace, Day," she

said quietly. "Then I pledge you my word I'll be good."

But Day, once her point was gained, swiftly cast aside her unwonted decision.

"All right, Amy, two days it is! But you'd better not give your word of honour that the baby will be good. I begin to think he never can be."

Sidney caught up Day's mood of banter.

"How many babies have you ever known, Day?" she inquired, as she sheared away at the brief white breadths before her.

"None intimately. However, I have observed them from a distance. Speaking of babies, where is Rob?"

"In his room with Jack."

Irene laughed.

"Poor Paul! I trust he does n't feel his nose is out of joint. He and Rob were just beginning to get on capitally, and —"

Amy Pope lifted her head once more.

"I am looking out for Paul," she reassured Irene. "He and the infant are my especial charges."

"Look out that they don't get jealous of each other, then," the other Amy advised her. "Do you suppose that yoke will fit any mortal infant?" She held it up for inspection. "It looks too small for anything but a turkey's neck." She shook her restored fluff of hair dubiously. Then she added, "We've called all the rest of the roll. Now does anybody know where Janet is keeping herself, this morning?"

The question brought them all to a little silence. Then Sidney suddenly burst out, —

“Is n’t it all horrid! Don’t you suppose she’ll ever come back to her old self?”

Day sighed. Then she shook her head.

“I wish I knew. I wish I had n’t started the plan for this party — for I suppose I really was the one to start it. The summer is so nearly over, we must go home so soon; and it seems as if we ought n’t to let it end in a fight like this.”

But Irene looked up sadly.

“It takes two to make a fight,” she said; “and poor Janet is doing this all alone. I wish I knew just how to end it; but I don’t. I don’t know her well enough to dare talk it over with her; I should be sure to say the wrong thing, and make it worse than ever. And — really, I don’t see how we can well apologize.”

It was Amy Browne who spoke next, quietly, as was her wont, yet with unwonted dignity.

“I should be ashamed of you, if you did apologize, Irene. I was n’t in it at the very first; I have kept out of it, all I could, have sat back and watched it happen. And I honestly, truly think that you girls have all been perfectly fair and kind to Janet Leslie.”

“Perhaps. I hope so,” Irene answered. “And yet, we can’t let it go on like this much longer.”

Sidney burst out for a second time.

“After all, it would be hard to say what It is,” she said flatly. “Now that Jack is back here again,

there is n't a thing that Janet says or does that you can find any fault with. She is perfectly polite, perfectly good-tempered, perfectly gracious — ”

“ And just about as sweet as a choke-cherry,” Amy Pope said bluntly, as she rose. “ Still, like the cherry, it 's her nature to, and I suppose it will go on until the end of time, without our being able to mend matters in the very least.”

And the sewing bee disbanded, without another word.

In fact, to all seeming, there was no word for it to say. As far as the speakers could discover, they had spoken not merely the truth, but the whole truth as well. Outwardly the relations between Jack and Janet had not altered in the very least. True, he was once more under the Leslie roof; but Janet took every possible occasion to insist upon the impersonality of the make-up of her house-party. Not that she discussed the fact, however; she merely saw to it that it was tacitly understood; saw to it that Jack realized that his welcome lay in other hands than hers. Her manner to him was unchanged. There was the same punctilious politeness, the same remote courtesy, always so much more hostile than any open warfare.

All this was obvious and on the surface. Nevertheless, a close observer might have made out, now and then, a tiny rent in Janet's cloak of superiority, a sudden reservation, as if she checked herself upon the very verge of some remark which might lead to a change in the whole situation, an occasional slight

hesitation as if she were not sure how best to wear her aggressive armour, or as if she even felt the fret of its weight, and longed to cast it aside once and for all. For the present, the situation was unchanged. None the less, as the days went on, that situation held within itself a little edge of question for the future.

It was only the next afternoon, when Amy Pope came prancing into the library, where the others were trying to forget a pouring rain by means of books and sewing and a Sally Lunn for tea. A train of shrieks heralded her coming; and, when she did appear, the baby rode upon her shoulder, his fat fists clinched upon a handful of her hair.

Rob looked up languidly from the novel on his knee.

"Did ums?" he observed. "Hullo, Amy! What's up now? You look flustered."

"So I am." Heedless of the baby's equilibrium, she pirouetted across the rug and back again.

"What's the rumpus?"

"I have news, great news."

"Let her go, then. Maybe you'll feel better, once it's out."

Amy pulled down the corners of her mouth; but no effort on her part could subdue the sparkle in her eyes.

"The little lambie is going away, to-morrow, going away from us for ever," she announced.

"Thanks be!" Rob answered with fervour. "Who's the victim?"

Amy paused for a moment, as if to emphasize a climax. When the climax came, however, it needed no artificial emphasis.

"Lady Wadhams."

"Amy!"

"Amy Mehitabel Pope!"

"By thunder!"

"Yes." Amy slid the protesting infant from her shoulder. "There, dearest babe, go sit on Uncle Robin's knee," she adjured it.

Rob dodged.

"Not if I know myself! Get him off, Amy Pope. Get out!"

Amy laughed, transferred the burden to Jack, and fell to rearranging her disordered hair.

"I done it," she said vaingloriously then.

"Really?"

"The Lady Wadhams that was here?"

"But how did you ever work it, Amy?"

And the baby, excited by the chorus of question, added his mite to the conversation by giving utterance to a long-winded squeal which left him black in the face and strangling audibly.

"Do tell us all about it, Amy," Sidney besought her, when the human calliope was stilled.

Amy dropped into a chair and faced them, beaming.

"It was this way," she explained rapidly. "We took the baby. There was n't anybody else. Paul and I hunted the city over to find some relations for him. It seemed a shame to put him into an asylum, for

really, if one had time to discipline him, he would n't be so very horrid."

"Mm — possibly," Rob conceded, in a swift aside to any one whom it might concern.

But Amy swept on.

"It was a direct leading of providence. At first, I was just sorry for him, and trying to think what could be done with him to keep him from being neglected. Then, all at once, it struck me that, one day, Mary Browne had said Lady Wadhams would better adopt an orphan, instead of wasting all her baby talk on that idiot of a poodle. Really and truly, the baby did seem fully as forlorn as a lost puppy, and just about as useless, so I brought him home to think it over, more for the fun of it than for anything else. That night, I happened to remember — really, I never had connected the two things until then — how I had heard Lady Wadhams telling Mrs. Blanchard that she had had a little baby who only lived a week, or a month, or something, and how she had always meant to adopt a baby boy, only she never seemed to get about it. I was reading in the next room, while she was talking; and I never liked her half so well before. She was n't preposterous in the least — not on that one subject, I mean," Amy corrected herself hastily. "I remembered it, that first night, and it set me to thinking. Next day, I told Paul, and he went to thinking, too."

"Dangerous business," Rob said gravely, filling the pause while Amy caught her breath. "Hush, you



little beggar! Listen to your betters, when they are talking."

"And," Amy rushed on with her narrative; "then Paul wrote to his mother for some introductions, to prove we were n't quite crazy, and we've been corresponding, ever since. That's why I begged for another day or two, to make sure the matter was settled."

"And is it?" Irene asked her.

Amy rose. Then she picked up the baby who was endeavouring to garrote Jack by means of his necktie.

"The nurse comes down from Ottawa, this evening," she made laconic answer. "Come along, infant, come and have your paddy-paws washed, and do your Auntie Amy credit." And, the child once more upon her shoulder, Amy pranced away out of the room.

A pause followed her going. Then Rob spoke.

"Well, I am blessed!" he murmured.

Jack finished the untying of his necktie, tied it up again, and then, —

"The question is, will Lady Wadhams be?" he demanded pointedly.

And no one dared attempt an answer. Instead, Paul made thoughtful observation, —

"The poor poodle!"

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

**A**FTER all, it was Amy Pope who finally had it out with Janet, Amy who had predicted that the situation was bound to go on until the end of time, Amy who, aforetime, had expressed herself as dubious concerning Jack.

"It's the inconsistency of the thing that I can't comprehend," she told Janet flatly. "At Smith, you and Jack were the best chums possible. Up here —" She let her sentence die away to an expressive pause.

"I know all that," Janet made honest answer. "Down there, one does n't think so much about such things. Up here, among all my friends, it's different."

"But, if they don't care, why should you?" Amy demanded.

Janet's chin lifted. Her reply came crisply.

"I never have been used to letting my friends draw my social lines for me," she announced.

Amy laughed.

"What utter nonsense! Janet, you can be a perfect dear, when you choose; but you'd better go back again over your first-year course in logic. Then you would n't tangle yourself up in your statements as you do. If your friends don't draw your social lines for you, why in the world, when you come back to them,

do you have to rub out all your lines and have their places changed?"

And Janet, opening her mouth to continue her own defence, shut it again and fell silent.

It was now three days since the baby, kicking madly, had made a shrieking exit in the arms of a crisp and frilly nursemaid. The entire household, even to Mary Browne, had assembled on the steps to watch his departure. Then, with one consent and with the precision of a military drill, the group had faced inward, and a deep sigh of satisfaction had run around the circle. Moreover, the satisfaction had not concerned itself solely with the brightening prospects of the child. Notwithstanding the love and pity due one's lesser, weaker brethren, even Amy Pope admitted that it would be good to have one undisturbed night's rest.

The baby gone, that problem settled, Amy Pope promptly attacked the remaining unsolved problem. In characteristic fashion, she rushed upon it energetically and without forethought. What was more, she grappled with it and fought it to a finish, although more than once in the course of the struggle it seemed a matter of some uncertainty what that finish was to be. Janet had come down to breakfast, that morning, in a mood which was somewhat akin to her old-time humanity. Nevertheless, it had been the merest chance which had sent her and Amy Pope into Buade Street at the same hour. They met in front of Renfrew's, their errands done, and, lured by the

charm of the cool sunshine, they turned by tacit consent, crossed into Anne Street, went on out under the Kent Gate, crossed the gray-walled park and came into the Grande Allée, facing westward. Around them, August was slowly dying into autumn. Now and then a yellow leaf floated downward through the windless air; the distant views of hill and river were already putting on their purple robes, and in the amethyst light the scattered villages gleamed like little knots of lustrous pearls. Talking idly or falling into silence as they chose, the two girls walked on and on, out the Grande Allée, divested now of all its trumpery decorations and returned to at least a semblance of its former dignity, past the Plains where only the trodden grass remained to tell the story of the summer's pageantry, and on again until Mount Hermon was behind them and Sillery Point lay at their very feet.

Half way down the flight of steps which links the church above to the purple sands beneath, the two girls dropped down, partly to rest, partly to enjoy the picture opening out before them. Beside them, Wolfe's Cove was a mere stretch of muddy flats, for the tide was at its lowest ebb. Beyond, the twin cities upon either bank seemed shaking hands across the bending stream; while, to the westward, the river lay outrolled, a mighty roadway leading inland, its surface fretted into little shining waves, like gleaming eyes winking a defiance at the ruined bridge which huddled prostrate, crumpled, upon the southern shore,

powerless to throw its rein across the unbridled might of the majestic stream. And behind them, the little gothic church, perched on her jutting red-rock wall of cliff, seemed brooding peacefully, unchangingly above the ever-changing river.

The picture of itself was quite enough to hold one speechless. Yet Amy, though her eyes were wandering to and fro across the landscape, had her own other reasons for her silence. All at once, finding herself there alone with Janet Leslie who, as a rule, had never been her chosen comrade, there had flashed up into her mind the memory of her talk with Paul, the night before, the memory of the sombre gravity in his gray eyes as, leaning on the terrace rail, he had rested them by turns upon her face and on the moving lights that flitted to and fro above the inky river.

"I believe," he had burst out suddenly, as he halted at the upper end of the terrace and plumped his elbows on the rail, in token that he meant to stop there for a little while; "I believe that, after all, *Pax vobiscum* is a good deal my creed."

Amy laughed scoffingly, for as yet she had no notion that Paul's usual mood of chaff had fled away and left him earnest.

"You! You're a born squabbler," she objected.

Paul rested his chin on his fists, then turned, fists and all, to face her. In the glare of the light above their heads, Amy was surprised at the expression in his honest eyes.

"Like beauty, it's only just skin deep," he told her, after a little pause. "Besides, a squabble is n't a real row. What's more, I've had precious little experience in rows. I don't seem to know their precise code of manners."

"You mean?" Amy asked him, with a glance over her left shoulder.

Paul nodded.

"Yes, Jack and Janet, of course. To my mind, the matter is a good deal worse than ever. I'd rather she — she clawed his eyes out and then wept over the ruin she'd created, than treated him in this snuffy fashion. To watch her, you'd think he had done her a mortal injury in letting himself be insulted by her. Yes. I mean *insult*. It amounts to that, in the long run."

"And yet," Amy reflectively traced a pattern in the dew which lay heavy on the iron rail before her; "Janet does n't really do a single thing."

"Of course. That's the pesky part of it all," Paul responded. "It's what she does n't do, and the way she goes about it, that's the trouble. After a fashion, I can't help liking Janet; we used to be good chums, and I must say she has put up with a few expressions of my candid opinion in a most saintly fashion, even in this last summer. Still, if I were in Jack's place, Amy Pope, I'd be hanged if I would n't knock her down."

"I wish he would," Amy made unexpected answer.

Paul shrugged his shoulders.

"Horrid bad form," he suggested tersely. "She's a girl."

"Of course. It would n't be sanctified for him; but I suspect it would be the best thing in the world for Janet. She needs a good, sound drubbing, to bring her to her senses."

There came another pause, before Paul spoke again.

"I don't pretend to know any too much about girls," he said slowly then; "but I've a sneaking notion that Janet has come to her senses, and that that's the clue to the whole trouble."

"What do you mean?"

Paul's reply was pithy.

"It's a long sight easier to climb gracefully up on one's high horse than to climb gracefully down again."

"Perhaps." Amy wiped away her pattern with her muslin-puffed elbows. "What then?" she made demand, after a minute or two of futile reflection.

"That somebody has got to get a good grip on her, and then yank her down," Paul made inelegant response. "What's more, Amy, I rather think —"

"Well?" she prodded him.

"Think it's up to you."

"Me? I? Paul! I won't!" Amy faced him in sudden consternation.

"Don't be too sure; at least, not until you've had a chance to think it out," he argued. "In a way, even if it is a thankless task, there's a good deal in your favour. On your own showing, you've never

been especial chums with either Jack or Janet. She can't well accuse you of taking sides. The others won't: Sidney because she does n't dare trust her temper, Day because she is too much on the one side, the others because — why, because it is n't in them. As for me," he laughed shortly; "I'm a boy. It never would do for me to be tackling a girl. But you — You see all sides of a thing; you go straight to your point, and, what's more, you have a trick of not putting a fellow's back up by the way you go about it."

Amy's smile was very gentle. In all her popular young life, she had never had a compliment that pleased her more.

"Thank you, Paul," she answered slowly. "I'm glad if I've seemed that way to you. But, about Janet, I really could n't do it. I should only make more trouble, not prevent it."

"Not you," he urged. "You could do it all right, and — really, it must be done." His eyes dropped to the river below, and he spoke more slowly, with a lowered voice and level accent. "Amy," he went on; "do you know I can't help feeling there's a certain disgrace about this thing, a certain shame hanging around us all. It really does n't sound a pretty sort of story, our coming up here to spend the summer and have a rousing time of it together, and then our getting into a fight that would disgrace a slum kindergarten. In a way, of course, we did n't make the fight. Still, we're all in it more or less, all a little bit to blame."



"We're not to blame, Paul," Amy objected quickly.

But Paul maintained his ground, unshaken by the vehemence of her protest.

"Once a row of this kind is on," he told her gravely; "there's a blame hanging on to every single fellow who looks on, without doing his level best to break it up."

The band, far down the terrace, filled the pause with *God Save the King*. That ended, Paul put on his cap, crossed his arms upon the rail before him, and gave a little sigh.

"I hate like fury to lose a chum," he said inconsequently.

Amy made no pretext of a lack of comprehension.

"You'll find her again," she predicted confidently.

Paul shook his head.

"Mayhaps," he answered, and his accent was a little dreary. "I'm willing to go three quarters of the way; but, in a case like this, all my sense of justice makes me wait for her to take the first step. And, what's more," he shook his head again; "knowing Janet Leslie as I do, I'm precious fearful she'll never take it."

Against the background of the shining river and of the sunny purple hills, the little scene flashed up again before Amy's thoughtful eyes. She could see it all quite plainly: Paul's strong, wide shoulders, his earnest, freckled face, his troubled eyes, could even hear the dropping note of sorrow in his voice. She

had liked his depression, knowing, as she did, its cause. She had liked his arguments, his sense of the responsibility that lay upon them all, liked, above all, his loyal regret for his broken trust in his old-time chum. And beside her the chum was sitting now, her chin on her hands, her sharp eyes grown strangely gentle with some hidden thought which was curling the corners of her lips into a smile far more attractive than any they had worn for many a week.

Amy watched her silently for a moment, letting one picture rest upon the other, as if to form a composite photograph of the good will which yet might come again between them. Then, —

“Janet?” she said suddenly.

Without speaking, even without losing her contented little smile, Janet turned her dreamy eyes on her companion.

“Well?” she asked.

“Do you realize how nearly the summer is over?”

For her sole response, Janet pointed to the yellowing trees that backed the Cove upon their left. Then she resumed her old position.

“And it might have been so perfect,” Amy went on slowly. “Dearie, I only wish it had.”

To her surprise, Janet did not resent her words. Instead, she gave a little sigh.

“I wish so, too. Still, I suppose it could n’t.”

“Why not?”

“We did n’t fit. People don’t, always, when you

get them under one roof, no matter what good friends they 've been before. And then, besides — " She hesitated, paused.

"Yes," Amy told her fearlessly; "besides that, there was Jack."

Slowly Janet nodded, once and yet again.

"Yes," she assented gravely. "Yes, there was always Jack — and me."

For a minute, Amy's fingers shut together, as if she gripped something, possibly her courage, between her strong, brown little hands. Then she turned to Janet, and, turning, her gravity matched Janet's own.

"Janet, dear," she said then; "there are two sides to any question that comes up. Still, I don't know but it's something worth the doing, to prove to the world at large that a railroad uniform may possibly be holding a man inside it."

The words were quiet, friendly, wholly kind; yet Amy's courage failed her, as she saw the scarlet tide roll up across Janet's cheeks and brow. For one instant, Janet's composure left her; her face broke away from its steady lines. Then she rallied swiftly, and, turning, she shut her hands on those of Amy.

"I do know it," she said breathlessly. "What is more, I told Jack Blanchard so, last night."

But not all of Amy's tact and petting could ever bring Janet Leslie to disclose Jack's answer.



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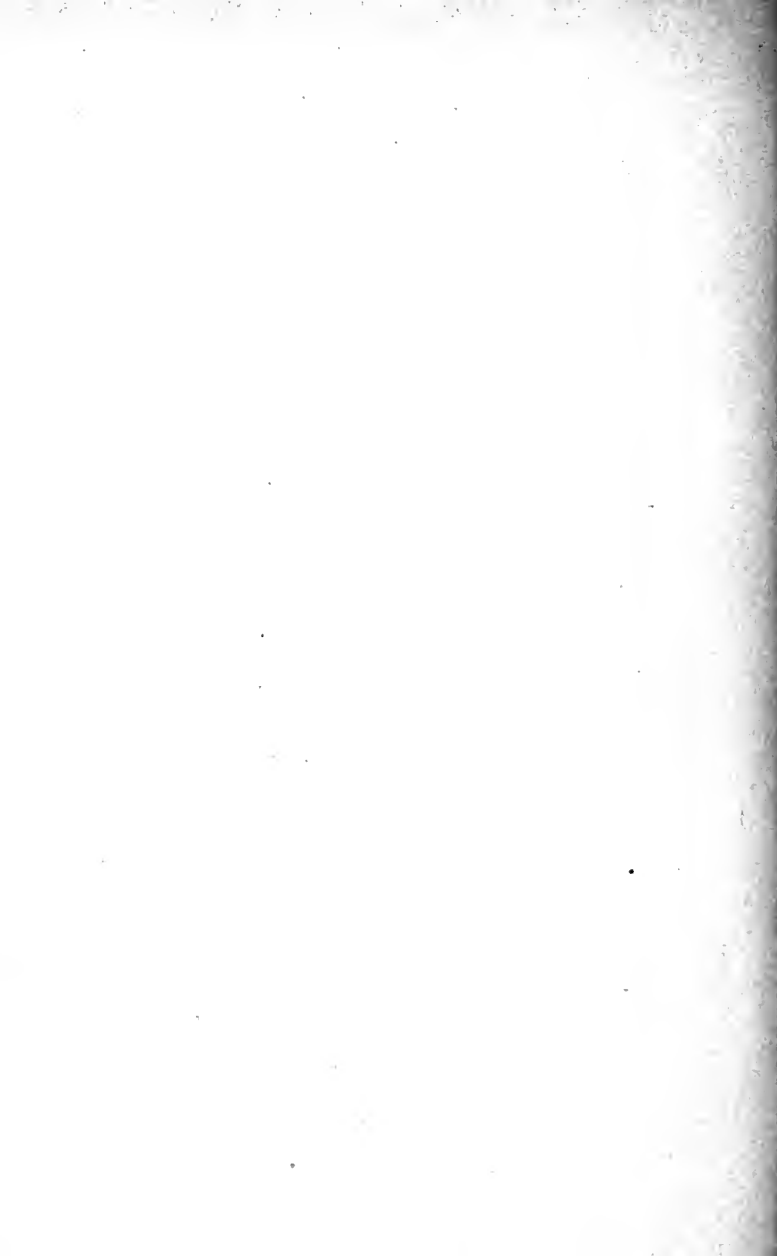
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